

## Sparks

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## Sparks

by [jungkooksfic](#)

### Summary

*George watched as the drummer's spread thighs jumped with effort to hit the bass drum, the chain dangling from his belt loop bouncing up and down with each beat. George couldn't see this guy's face with the mask and hood, but he knew the cocky bastard must be grinning.*

*He was good. No, he was perfect.*

*And god damn did he know it.*

George's band was the best of the best until this drummer, this unfortunately hot drummer, showed up and stole the spotlight.

In other words, George's world was about to flip upside-down (in a good way, he would realize), and this mysterious Dream is the culprit.

### Notes

I'm super excited to write this! The first two chapters will mostly be introductory, but the

plot will kick in soon, I promise.  
I hope you all enjoy!

# Figure It Out

## Chapter 1

### *George*

Everyone knows about them.

Maybe that's a bit of a statement.

*Everyone* being the small crowd of mostly nobody college kids whose only night life is going to a music night club every Saturday and the occasional Friday if they're feeling festive. *Them* being George Notfund's band, containing four members with the very creative name of The Feral Boys.

Despite this *everyone*, this crowd knowing all about The Feral Boys, they could hardly be called famous. Not by a long shot. They were recognizable within the confines of the four brick walls bordering the music night club they preformed at every Saturday at 8 PM sharp. The Feral Boys were the club's pride, the best of the other exceptionally terrible bands they harbored.

George wished to be recognizable outside of this rather underground club. He had dreams to preform on stages wider than his car to a crowd that wasn't entirely intoxicated. He had dreams to hear his own electric guitar bouncing off the speakers of his car radio.

George was a dreamer.

And George was also late.

Remember how his band preforms at 8 PM *sharp*?

"Dude!" Sapnap shouts out his van window, "get your British ass in here! These drums ain't gonna play themselves!"

"I'm trying!" George shouts back. He really was. He was trying to get his guitar in his bag, over his shoulder, his shoes in his Vans, his ass out the door, and surely enough-

"Finally," Karl whistles.

"Took you long enough," Quackity quips from the back seat.

"Shut up," George retorts.

"Let's blast this bitch," Sapnap says once George had hardly clicked his seat belt of the back seat, guitar strewn haphazardly across his lap and into Quackity's "personal bubble" as he grumbled.

(This is where Sapnap would've revved the engine and blasted into the next dimension if he were driving a sports car instead of an old VW van.)

Usually, they were pretty good at leaving with plenty of time to run over their setlist, set up, and get a drink.

But usually, George didn't sleep in until 7:30 PM and wake up to the beautiful sound of Quackity shouting in his face and shaking him awake.

"Why were you sleeping in so late, anyway?" Karl asks, head turned over his shoulder as he

causally gripped tightly onto the handle above his head as the van rocked back and forth with the not-so-gentle movements of Sapnap's rather dangerous driving.

"Practicing," George replies as he looks down at his fingers that felt as if he had the permanent indents of strings into them. He went well past the earlier hours of the morning trying to get in some last-minute practice time, enough that his fingers ached with each press into the fretboard of his electric guitar. Eventually, he fell asleep in his seat with his guitar across his lap and his pick loose in his palm.

"Fair enough, but now it's five minutes past eight," Karl says, facing ahead just in time to shout *please, Sapnap, not the birds!*

"These birds don't stand a chance when *I'm* on the road," Sapnap says over Karl's shrieks of protest.

Yeah, they were quite the interesting group.

"This isn't game, you dumb fuck!" Quackity shouts over the bickering. George made the expert decision to cup his hands over his ears. "Get us to the *fucking* club without hitting any *fucking* birds because we're *fucking* late thanks to our genius- Jesus! Sapnap!"

"Out," Sapnap says simply as the van appeared to be (supposedly) parked.

They scramble from the van. George slings his case over his shoulder, hops out of the sliding van door, and bounds from the parking lot to the back door of the club. As it was past 8 in an often bustling city, George wound between people, murmuring apologies and reaching the door after what felt like forever. The blinking, broken lights of the club, spelled SMP over the entrance to the otherwise inconspicuous metal door. The lighted letters illuminated the pavement of the dark sidewalk filled with the occasional pedestrian. "SMP" stood for "Super Music Place" run by Schlatt, who was a "drunk old git" according to George. But a club by the name of "Super Music Place" sounded pretty stupid to put it lightly, so most everyone just called it the SMP.

As soon as George nudges open the door with his hip, throwing it open enough for Karl, Sapnap and Quackity to scramble in behind him, he found himself running into a wall of *chest* that he found to be the bouncer.

"Hi," George says breathlessly, now acutely aware of the sweat dripping down the side of his neck. "We're performers, and we should be on stage right about now-"

"Sorry kid," the bouncer says, blank stare adjusting into what seemed to be an apathetic glare, "you're late. Your slot got filled."

"*What?*" the group choruses. They'd been late once before because Quackity lost track of time and one thing lead to another and the band ended up on stage ten minutes late, which was actually worse than their current situation.

But still. The Feral Boys were supposed to be *the* group of the SMP. Not the late band who was *replaced* within a few minutes.

"Who's replacing us, anyway?" George says with clear bitterness underlying his voice. He tried to peer over the tall bouncer's muscular shoulder to the crack between the backstage curtains in an attempt to see who was standing on stage, plugging in their instruments. "The Guitar Heroes? The Singers?" For context, these were both horrible music groups that preformed on Fridays and Saturdays at the club during the early night.

“No,” the bouncer says flatly. “Some other guys. Never seen ‘em before.”

“Can you get them off stage, then?” George insists. This was *their* slot. *Their* time. He wasn’t going to let someone swoop in and take this from them.

“No,” the bouncer says again. “The leader was... persuasive.” George’s eyes flicker to the bouncer’s hand, where he can see a folded twenty-dollar bill tucked between his thick fingers. George’s jaw nearly drops to the ground. What no-name *asshole*-

“George,” Karl says gently. George feels a hand on his shoulder and a gentle squeeze. He lets the fight leave him as he knew it was pointless.

“Let me know if any other slots open up, alright?” George says to the bouncer. The bouncer grunts in recognition.

“We were only five minutes late this time,” Sapnap whines from behind George as they navigate from the backstage stretch to the mash pit of crowd at the foot of the tall stage. As soon as the backstage door opened, the previously muffled noise hit them all at once. George grimaces as he keeps a tight grip on his bag strap. It went without saying that leaving instruments unattended in the back room was basically a kiss of death as George had lost an acoustic guitar by leaving it for twenty minutes. This electric guitar was his pride and joy, a black Fender Stratocaster, the small tick marks on the knobs worn from its frequent and rapid use. In other words, George wouldn’t dream of letting it out of his sights for more than a few seconds.

With the rest of his band trailing behind him, George weaved his way through the mass gathered around the foot of the stage. It was the usual crowd by glance, people in sparse clothing with maximum hair dye and many piercings, the air thick with alcohol and loud, drunk laughter. The lighting was dark and feverish, lights switching from hues of dark blue to light green like the flickering between camera filters. It felt wrong looking up at the stage instead of being on it. George was so used to being three feet above the crowd, heart pumping with adrenaline, fluttering smile plastered on his face and hands clammy under the head of the spotlight.

The stage was dark, yet the movement of whatever band had the *audacity* to pay off the bouncer was setting up their instruments. George turns to face Karl, who was pressed shoulder-to-shoulder between him and Quackity, and Sapnap who lingered behind him. “Do you have any idea who these guys are?” George shouts over the loud atmosphere. Between flashes of light, he can make out Karl’s unknowing expression.

“Uhh,” Karl shouts back. “I don’t think so?”

“Wait ‘til you see the drummer!” some unknown individual shouts from somewhere beside George. They bump their shoulder against his. “He’s hot as *shit*. And so fuckin’ good.” George narrows his eyes,

“Has he preformed here before?”

The person shakes their head, their short hair falling over their wide eyes. “Nope! This band was real big at L’Manburg until they decided that crowd was too small for them and came down here.”

George tuts. “L’Manburg? Are you shitting me?” For brief context, L’Manburg and SMP were rival music clubs. Schlatt was very clear about that, so the fact that *this* group was able to preform here under Schlatt’s watch was a shock.

The person shrugs. “I’m telling you, man. They’re *good*.”

George opens his mouth to protest, to say he didn't spend the entirety of the previous night rehearsing just for some big-dicked drummer to take his spot with a twenty dollar bill until all of a sudden, the warm, bright, yellow lights hit the stage to reveal the culprits of this situation.

Briefly shielding his eyes from the immediate illumination, George waited for his eyes to adjust to properly see who exactly these people were.

There's a weak cheer from the crowd before the lead singer adjusts his microphone to his mouth before promptly saying "let's blow off this fuckin' roof with noise, yeah?" before the crowd roars in response. There couldn't be more than seventy people in here total, including the people slumped over the bar stools in the far side of the club. George's ears ring as he scans over the contents of the band. The singer, holding a hollow body electric guitar, had thick fluffy hair and a sort of stance that gave George an idea that he knew what he was doing. To his left was a lanky figure in a dark hoodie, holding an all black electric bass guitar, thumb hitched and fingers hovering over the strings. He couldn't make out much of his face with the hood up, but he could tell the bassist was looking back at their drummer.

Ah, so *this* was the drummer.

George couldn't see much of him as he seemed to be wearing a black face mask with a bright-ass green (or yellow, who knows) hoodie pulled over his head, yet a few strands of blonde hair peeked out from under the hood.

Intrigued, George watched as the drummer gave the bassist a small nod, and within this small exchange, the audience was dead silent until the bassist started off the song. No drums, no vocals, but perfect tempo.

It was impressive, really, how the bassist was mostly pulling at the strings from the frets with his left hand as opposed to his lower right hand.

Then, the vocalist leaned close to his microphone, took a small breath, and sang,

*"Nothing here to see*

*Just a kid like me*

*Trying to cuss and see*

*Trying to figure it out."*

His voice was rich, hushed, but controlled. Truly impressive.

George watched as the bassist was holding down eighth notes with deadly precision as the singer sung a few more lines. They couldn't be *that* impressive, right?

But then the drums came in.

The song was overall calm with a sense of build under the surface, and then the drummer came in, *dead* on the beat, right in the pocket without so much of a breath out of line.

Even without a musician's perspective, it was impossible not to appreciate how in the groove this trio was, how the singer's voice rung through the audience.

But as the chorus approached, George didn't know whether he should look at the singer whose voice grew in volume, the bassist who was just *shredding*, or the drummer who was truly giving

himself an upper-body workout with this beat.

*"I'll let it go 'cause I won't see you later*

*And I'm not allowed to talk it out."*

It wasn't until this chorus that George suddenly knew where to look.

The drummer.

His flawless and flashy performance screamed for recognition that George simply gave in to.

The crash and ride cymbals of the drum were ringing through the air, loud, almost uncontrolled and wild as the drummer attacked the bass drum and floor tom mercilessly, drum sticks flying across each section of the drum set until he let go and all of a sudden, the ringing cymbals silenced as if on his command. George's jaw was unmistakably dropping. It was in this moment that he knew this drummer was really something special. He had a kind of control that was far from a dime in a dozen.

In fact, George had never seen anyone drum like *this*, enough that George couldn't stop staring at him even as the bright spotlight was on the singer alone.

Eventually, the vocals faded away as the singer resorted to guitar alone, but this was where the bass and the drums, the damned *drums* took the show.

At first, the bassist took a step forward where the spotlight slipped onto him, and his first and ring finger worked up and up the fretboard of his bass guitar in an expert, loud solo that had the crowd around George swaying and whooping and cheering while George stared with wide eyes, shell shocked.

Then the fucking drummer went off.

George watched as the drummer's biceps flexed, drumsticks flying fast and growing in sound that George couldn't hardly comprehend each slam against the surface. He watched as the drummer's spread thighs jumped with effort to hit the bass drum, the chain dangling from his belt loop bouncing up and down with each beat. George couldn't see this guy's face with the mask and hood, but he knew the cocky bastard must be grinning.

He was good. No, he was perfect.

And god *damn* did he know it.

As the electric bass hummed and the drums rang with the last beat, both visibly panting, the crowd had a momentary silence, not a breath taken in the whole room.

And then, the entire room, even the bartender and the bouncer backstage exploded into applause and cheers and screams as slowly, the band picked themselves up and waved gratefully to the audience. The drummer rose from behind his set and walked to the front of the stage to where the microphone was. Giving the singer a congratulatory pat on the shoulder, the drummer brings the mic to where his mouth must be under his mask.

Now that the spotlight was on him, George could see the drummer semi-properly now. Aside from his green hoodie, he wore loose, black ripped jeans and a thick belt, boots clinking against the stage and pocket chain bouncing with each step.

“Hey,” the drummer says simply, and the crowd cheers. His voice was low, a little breathless. From under his hood, George swore he saw a bright pair of eyes twinkling in the lights of the stage. He looked like the type of guy who was made to perform, the kind of person who was built for the spotlight. “Thanks for letting us play. This is Bad-” he jerks a thumb in the direction of the bassist, “this is Wilbur-” he points next to him to the vocalist, who gives a kind smile, “and I’m Dream.” He pokes a finger to his own chest. *Dream*, huh? George scoffs. What a name. “I know we’re not who you were expecting tonight, but hey, you snooze you lose, right?” George’s eyes snap back to the drummer at that, but as soon as he does, he finds that this guy, Dream, was already staring at him dead in the eyes.

So, his eyes were bright and green after all, then.

George feels like he can’t breathe as he tries, he really does, to look bitter and angry. But as they stare at each other, George can’t find it in himself to look pissed off anymore.

“Better luck next time,” Dream murmurs into the microphone, eyes still glued on George to the point where Karl and Quackity were staring at him too, saying *why is he looking at you?* but their voices were drowning in the crowd. George felt his face flare up, either because he was flustered or because he was flat-out *pissed* at the amount of malice in this guy’s voice.

The audacity was endless.

“Anyway,” Dream continues, as if he *owns* this club and can talk for all he wants. George hated how the crowd ate it up, how their cheers egged him on. “We’re The Dream Team, what you just heard was ‘Figure It Out’ by Royal Blood, thank you and good night!”

The audience screams their approval as the lights shut off, and the silhouettes of Bad, Dream, and Wilbur fade from the stage. George squints as from the side of the stage’s curtain, he can see the bouncer motioning to him in a signal that they were on next. George hears Sappnap whistle behind him.

“We have to follow *that?*” Sappnap exclaims as they weave their way back through the still-ecstatic crowd. George’s grip around his bag’s strap tightens.

“We’re bad ass, we’ll be fine,” Karl responds breezily, nudging open the door already with ease.

George still can’t shake the stamina of the drummer, how he actually grew in ability as the song went on and the beat became more intense. He thought people like that were myths, unreachable. Invincible.

But here was this mysterious Dream, on Earth beside him. Not a myth, and not quite unreachable.

“Let’s do this, fuckers,” Quackity says.

George heaves a sigh. “Yeah,” he says back, smile growing. This drummer wanted to play dirty? George could play dirty, too. He’d show this guy what he was made of. “Let’s do this, fuckers.”



# Alrighty Aphrodite

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

### *Dream*

It hadn't always been like this, Dream's life.

He hadn't always been the type to slip in someone's time slot and slip the bouncer a twenty to ensure it. In fact, Dream hadn't always been the type to be a ruthless drummer at *all*.

Quite the opposite, actually.

Dream ten years ago was something of a loser having a wardrobe void of his current ripped jeans and instead hideous khaki shorts and light blue polo shirts. He was a follower. The kid who obliged to the rules and never invented them. The child pliant in the hands of authoritarians.

High school shaped him up. Dream figured out really quick that if he wanted to be seen, he had to bend the rules to his own life. He had to *make* the rules for himself and not waste time listening to people telling him what to do.

Nowadays, it was in his blood to be bold. Enough so that it bled into his music.

Dream found himself letting Bad grip his wrist and guide him through the folds of people and to a more suitable view of the stage they had ruled just moments ago. He could sense Wilbur somewhere behind them, struggling to shoulder through the people without ramming someone off their feet. Dream liked the atmosphere of this club much more than L'Manburg, where the lights were bright enough to give him a headache and the people were even drunker than here at the SMP.

The performers were much more interesting as well.

"Nice job, team!" Bad shouts over the crowd, and from the way his dark eyes crinkled, Dream figured he was smiling under his mask. Dream returns the gesture.

"Yeah," Dream echoes, though his voice drowned in the air, "we made those other guys look ready to piss themselves. I'd count it as a success."

"Language!" Bad shouts, though Wilbur's snickering signaled that Bad's continued weak attempts to clean their mouths was futile. Bad sighs.

The banter silences once the previously dark stage was lit to life.

The lighting of the stage was like the revving of a flashy engine, or the restarting of a brilliant machine. There's nothing quite like that spark, that warm excitement that always initiates no matter how particularly skilled the group is. But Dream happened to know that this group was particularly talented.

The Feral Boys. Dream hadn't heard them actually play before, but he'd heard the name floated around at L'Manburg. He'd heard people bicker over whether The Dream Team or The Feral Boys were better, and never heard a common consensus. He figured the club must be buzzing know that both groups were going head-to-head for once, two ties previously disconnected that were now

becoming intertwined. Bound.

Dream tugs his hood back enough that it didn't fall in his eyes, and he could see the stage properly. He silently thanked himself for his own height to see over the rows of heads staring up in awe at the group.

The group configured themselves in a professional manner that everyone was visible to the audience; the bassist, clad in a bright but fashionable set of apparel, was alongside the drummer, whose dark hair and white bandana were his most striking features. The singer was front and center, beanie atop his dark hair and grin revealing his unnerved excitement. But the guitarist—Dream could tell just by the way the others glanced to him that he was their leader. The way he stood, how he held his black guitar with an ease only a masterful musician could showed that he was worthy of their respect.

Dream remembered locking eyes with him in the crowd, and though he had never seen him before, Dream knew he was someone worth remembering.

After the crowd's exhilarated cheer of approval, the guitarist kicked off the song alongside the drummer and the bassist. Immediately, the lighting switched from a bright white to a softer blue, setting the moody theme of the music. It was a very minor, temperamental feel, enough that Dream could practically feel the crowd swaying around him.

And the singer leaned into his microphone, strumming his own guitar as support to their lead guitarist, who was painting soft strokes as background to the song.

*"Take a seat back in your clam shell*

*If the ocean's not enough,*

*Nor am I."*

The singer's eyes closed as he sang, and though his voice was unique, it was unique in such a *good* and rare way that Dream realized this group wasn't ordinary at all. Not in the slightest. As the verse dragged along, Dream tried to put his finger on which musician was the sore thumb, which link was the weakest, but he couldn't. The bassist and drummer were locked into the beat without fail, the singer hummed along the groove, and the guitarist was riffing and providing a top layer of beauty to the song.

They all served their purpose to perfection.

Dream clicks his tongue. So The Feral Boys were a force to be reckoned with after all.

As the chorus approached, the lights faded from a lighter blue to a darker shade, and the mood went from soft to intense as the previous clicking of the drums grew into something more complex.

*"If I'd known you'd sold on maybe*

*I'd a let you waste another guy."*

The guitarist effortlessly riffs from the upper frets of his guitar to the lower octaves where he strums the chords *right* on the beat.

*"Well, alrighty Aphrodite*

*Go whip that red for other eyes."*

It's exactly as the strong chords of the song between the chorus and the verse switch from minor to major that the lights switch from dark blue to bright gold in a way that had the audience cheering their approval. Yet in an instant, this high energy nurtured by each instrument faded back into the previous emotional theme.

As Dream's attention focused on the guitarist, Dream tried to watch his fingering patterns for flaws, tried to nitpick his technique.

He found himself empty of critique.

Dream had been in more bands than he could count on both hands between middle school, high school and college, and every single band had a worthy guitarist. But, with each guitarist and their talent came the want to be loved, to be appreciated. Each time, it was at the expense of the band. In other words, being a show-off buries the delicate bond and communication of music. Concert musicians exist for a reason.

But not this guy.

He knew when to step into the spotlight, but likewise, when to step out of it. He knew when to be support, and he knew when to be the focus.

Dream *really* started to notice him once he became the focus.

He watched as the guitarist reached a foot forward and pressed on a distortion pedal, immediately adding a distorted, loud, dirty sound affect that had every pair of eyes trained on him. On cue, the lights switched from their previous soft blue to a blaring red. But the guitarist didn't crumble; instead, with the sway of his movements, the tap of his foot, the build and build he created, he looked like he was having fun. Even with the shadows over his face, fallen hair shielding his face from view, Dream could tell he was grinning. Dream's jaw drops as he watches the guitar mercilessly attack the higher notes of his guitar, fingers navigating the skinnier frets with an admirable precision.

His energy was contagious as the band and audience alike responded, the band grinning at his clear success before the guitarist once again clicked off his distortion pedal and returned to a mere support to the rest of the group.

As the chorus played once again, Dream still couldn't stop staring at the guitarist. After such an energy-draining guitar solo, he looked and played just as perfect as before, hitting each chord without fail.

The song faded, but each instrument seemed more interesting than when the song had kicked off. The baseline was more complex, the guitar's riff carried into the resolve of the song, and the drums remained consistent and grounding to the rest of the group. Dream felt as if this song wasn't a mere flex of ability, but more of a story. There was the calm beginning, the building chorus and strong vocals, the climax of the guitar solo, and the resolve of the conclusion.

The crowd roared once the band relaxed as a signal the song was over, and Dream found himself clapping his hands together in approval. How could he not? This music was a true piece of art.

Clearly out of breath, the guitarist slings his guitar off his shoulder and sets it on its stand before he jogs over to the singer, gives him a bright grin, and tips the microphone to his mouth. The lights illuminated his features. He was gorgeous, unmistakably. Though he had brown hair, brown eyes,

and a casual outfit, his appearance was far from mundane. Something about this guy was... intriguing to Dream.

The guitarist opens his mouth to speak, but the crowd cheers before he has the chance, and breathily, he laughs. "Thank you, thank you," he says. Dream's ears perk at his accent. It was similar to Wilbur's. "Sorry we were late today." The crowd cheers again. "That was 'Alrighty Aphrodite' by Peach Pit. Let's give it up for our stellar singer, Quackity, our favorite drummer, Sapnap, and our bassist, Karl!" Quackity tips the microphone to himself, giving the guitarist a sly look before saying,

"Let's give it up for this talented fucker right here, George our guitarist!" The audience screams loud enough to leave the Dream's ears ringing.

*George*, huh? It was a suiting name.

George grins back at Quackity, elbows him playfully before Karl jogs behind them and says, "we're The fuckin' Feral Boys, have a good night everybody!" With that, the lights shut off, and Dream is left in a pool of his own curiosity.

"Where are you going?" Bad calls from behind him as Dream was already on his way out of the mosh pit. Dream looks at Bad from over his shoulder and slants his eyes,

"I just wanted to see The Feral Boys," Dream responds. "So I could scope out our competition."

Bad's brows furrow. "But what about the other groups?"

Dream shrugs, "shouldn't be a problem." He turns back around. "I'm gonna grab a drink and go, if that's alright?" Bad shouts his approval, and Dream takes that as his green light to weave through the crowd once again, but this time not to the backstage door. He veers to the side, slips onto a slippery velvet stool, leans his elbows on the counter of the bar to order himself a drink.

He didn't think much of the figure slinking in the stool beside him until he felt a finger tapping his shoulder, enough to force his attention from his Instagram feed.

In a quick motion, Dream flicks up his mask from where he had been sipping his drink and swivels around to face the intruder.

Ah, the guitarist.

He was even cuter up close.

"Hey," Dream says, setting his glass down behind him.

"Hi," the guitarist says shortly.

"I like your accent," Dream drawls. His rings clink against his glass as he picks it up again. "Where're you from?"

"Britain," George says. His tone was blunt, but not entirely cold as he fully sits down on the stool beside Dream. Dream chuckles.

"Yeah, I figured." He takes a long drink before readjusting his mask once more and meeting George's eyes. The funny thing was that George was acting as if Dream was pestering him when, in reality, George was the one to approach Dream in the first place. "Nice performance."

“Thanks.” Now he sounded a little less rigid. “Same to you.” George hesitates before admitting, “that one solo at the end was... pretty sick.”

“Same to you,” Dream echoes. “And thanks.”

George spent a good deal staring at his drained drink before Dream finally breaks the silence again, “you’re pissed at me for taking your time slot, aren’t you?”

George’s eyes narrow. “...a little, yeah.” George purses his lips before saying, “I just don’t understand why you needed to, y’know, pay off the bouncer.”

Dream shrugs, “I needed to lock in a spot for my band. And you were late. So.” Dream grins coyly at him.

George scowls. “Why *tonight* though?”

Dream’s face goes slack, “what, so you don’t know?”

“Don’t know *what*?” George replies. Dream huffs in amusement as he leans forward, enough to dig his hand in his back jeans pocket before fishing out a folded and slightly crumpled paper. After the few suspenseful seconds of unfolding the page, it was revealed to be a flier for a music competition being hosted at the SMP. Dream had discovered it on a stray lamppost near his apartment.

In a quick movement, Dream pushes the flier against George’s chest, who snatches it, scans it over, and tuts. “A competition, huh?”

“And all competitors must preform tonight to enter,” Dream says, black-nailed finger dragging along the letters in bold on the bottom of the flier. “All the slots were originally filled, but thanks to your tardiness, we had an opening.”

“The reward is being the-” George freezes as he squints at the words on the flier, as if he misread them. “The opening act for a concert in San Diego?”

Dream grins. “That’s right.” He tips his glass back and finishes the remains of his drink.

Georeg hums. “So, we want the same thing, don’t we?” Dream nods in acknowledgement. “Guess that makes us enemies.”

Dream snorts. “No need to be so dramatic, Georgie. It’s all friendly.”

“Don’t call me that,” George snips, but there’s no real bite to his words. “*Dreamie*.”

Dream cringes. “I take it back. We’re definitely enemies now.”

George laughs, a dainty, pleasant sound. “I’m glad there happened to be an opening after you,” George admits, “because if not, I would’ve been *so* pissed.”

Dream shrugs, “fair enough. Maybe you should get here on time, though.”

George’s eye twitches. “Maybe you shouldn’t be such a *dick*.”

“Maybe you should learn how to roll your ass out of bed before the sun goes down.”

George scowls. Dream couldn’t put his finger on whether they actually were mad at each other or if this was all coming from a playful nature, but he figured the line was blurred now that they both were fairly tipsy. “Why are you so mysterious?” George asks, motioning to Dream’s whole outfit

of a hoodie and a black mask.

“Why are you so short?”

George’s jaw drops, “I am *not*-”

Dream stands from his stool and, frankly, looks down at George, whose mouth shuts in an instant. “Well, okay, it’s not *my* fault you’re built like a fucking *pine tree*-”

“It’s not my fault you’re built like a fucking fern,” Dream quips.

Before George can respond with any other smart comments, someone swoops in behind him in a back-hug tight enough to make George squirm in protest. Dream immediately recognized the person as the raven-haired drummer from The Feral Boys: Sapnap.

“Now now,” Sapnap says, ruffling up George’s hair, “let’s not go attacking our competition, huh?”

George sighs, and Sapnap turns to face Dream. He whistles. “Dayum, you’re *hot*,” Sapnap says, tongue clicking at the top of his mouth. Dream laughs a little, scrunches his nose as his small, shy way of saying ‘thank you.’ “Dream, right?”

“Yup,” Dream replies.

“Pog.” Did he just say *pog*? “I’m Sapnap, this is Karl, this is the dumbass who somehow landed a spot in our band-”

“This dumbass is your lead *singer*, you dumb drummer fuck,” Quackity retorts.

“Sorry for George. He goes a little wild sometimes.” Sapnap forcefully pries George off of his stool, much to George’s whining. Sapnap leans close to George and scrunches his nose, “and by the smell of it, drunk.”

George stares at his bandmate, scandalized. Dream wheezes. “Did you just *sniff* me?”

Sapnap ignores the question. “Anyways, see you next week, Dream. Could I get your number or something? You’re actually pretty cool, we should all practice together sometime.”

“Sapnap!” George squawks. Dream snickers.

“Yeah, yeah. Sounds good. You guys are pretty cool too, loved that drum beat for the song.”

Sapnap glows with pride, even as he was attempting to elbow George to silence.

After exchanging numbers, Sapnap practically drags a visibly drunk George and the rest of his band out of the bar, with a cheerful *see you around, Dream!*

Dream grins to himself.

He hoped he would see them around.

That guitarist in particular.

I hope their enemies-to-lovers dynamic is coming through

# When The Sun Goes Down

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

### *George*

“It’s happening again.”

George’s eyes drift open a little, enough to see the blurry vision of his room. He was still half-tucked into bed, blankets thrown haphazardly across himself. He didn’t bother sitting up or rubbing his eyes awake, but his ears perked as he could hear the muffled voices coming from the other side of his door.

“Is George still asleep?” the other voice says. He focuses enough to determine the conversation was between Sapnap and Karl. What time was it?

“Yeah,” Karl murmurs. “His mom called again, didn’t she?”  
George closes his eyes, hoping for the sleep to pull him back into its clutches again.

“He always does this,” Sapnap whispers, “when she calls.”

Karl hums in agreement. “I worry about him.” George felt sick. Why couldn’t he fall asleep again? He pulls the blankets over himself properly, and shuts his eyes tight. He felt like a child hiding under the bed during a thunderstorm; he wasn’t solving anything, but at least this felt more safe. “Should we go wake him up?”

“No,” Sapnap replies. George really wished these walls weren’t so thin. “Best give him some space.”

George didn’t know why he bothered picking up her calls anymore.

He also didn’t know what time it was.

He didn’t really want to.

---

“Let’s run that again.”

“I’ll run your *mom* again.”

George nudged open the door with his foot enough to hear the usual banter of his band where he was met with the scene of their practice room; the cramped, small space filled with more guitars and keyboards than necessary and the walls covered in the sound-canceling panels that never fully worked. It was dark and a little depressing as there weren’t any windows, the only source of light being the bleary overhead lights that made George feel as if he was in a school cafeteria instead of an indoor practice space their college provided.

“Finally, Jesus,” Quackity drawls. George struggles to shut the door behind him as his arms were occupied with the tray of iced coffees.

“Sorry I’m late,” George says hastily as he hands out each proper order to his bandmates, “there was this Karen in front of me who was hounding on the worker and being all like *this Frappuccino*



*doesn't meet my American standards* and shit until eventually they kicked her out of the store.” He slings his guitar case off of his shoulder, picks up his own order, and practically drains the drink. Getting through 6 AM practice required a buttload of patience and caffeine.

“So, what were you guys doing?” George questions as he instinctively plugged his guitar into the amp, switched the amp on, and adjusted the volume knobs in the span of a few seconds. He could probably do that in his sleep at this point.

“Arguing over what song to play next,” Sapnap yawns, setting his coffee down beside him and hitting his drumstick against the symbol for dramatic affect.

George hums, taking a seat on a stool and propping his guitar far enough in his lap that he had the right angle for it. He felt too lazy to stand and play today.

“Well,” Quackity starts, speaking into the microphone. He forgot to adjust the volume again, so after his voice followed the high-pitched ringing sound that made them all cringe. That high-frequency wailing was such a typical sound that George didn't even bother to cover his ears. “I suggested that we do a dramatic rendition of the Wii theme but these two nimrods told me-”

“Absolutely not,” George finishes. “As of now, I'm not listening to any of your ideas, Quackity.”

“I second this,” Karl says.

“You guys are so mean to me,” Quackity whines, “is it because I haven't done a hair reveal? Is that what this is about?”

“How about some Arctic Monkeys?” Sapnap interrupts.

There's silence before Karl finally says, “well, that beats the Wii theme.”

Quackity scoffs, “hey now-”

After a good deal of common banter, they decided on “When The Sun Goes Down” as it was one of the more polished songs in their repertoire. They knew a good deal of Arctic Monkeys songs as the vocals and range seemed to suite Quackity and their band very well.

Glancing over to the singer, George gives him a brief nod before tapping his shoe against the linoleum of the floor to keep tempo as the drums didn't come in until about a minute or so into the song. The beginning chords were easy, mostly just arpeggios and some quick changes.

*“So who's that girl there?”*

*I wonder what went wrong*

*So that she had to roam the streets*

*She don't do major credit cards*

*I doubt she does receipts*

*It's all not quite legitimate.”*

Quackity's voice was a little scratchy at first, likely from just waking up a half hour ago.

*“But he's a scumbag, don't you know?”*

Ignoring the dull ache in his fingertips, George scratched his pick across his strings as the lazy

chords turned to powerful strums, and after a glance to Sapnap, he listens as the drummer taps his drum sticks together in a *one-two-three-four* to mark the beats before suddenly, the song went from sleepy low-energy to a high-energy rock. George pressed his fingers into the higher frets and didn't miss a beat now that he felt the energy of the music seep into his sleepy body and pep him awake. He felt the adrenaline buzzing once Karl breezed his fingers up his bass guitar to slide into the song and within the span of a few seconds, the instrumentals of their band were in synch, hitting each beat without fail. George felt a smile come to his face.

*"And they say he changes when the sun goes down!"*

George's ears pricked as he heard Sapnap hit the side of his drum instead of the center, making an out-of-place *crack* sound that distracted George enough to misplace his middle finger on the fret and ruin the B minor chord that was supposed to sound. Quackity glances at him in question but they continue to play. George curses under his breath.

This used to happen a lot. Whenever someone would make one small mistake, a finger too close to a fret or a stray drumstick hit, George would immediately mess up right after. He wouldn't be frustrated with his bandmates, but only with himself. No one really questioned it as every musician had their quirks, but George considered it his kryptonite. He was so focused on his surroundings and melting into them that any flaws were mirrored onto him.

Once the song ended, George could practically feel his amp vibrating with sound next to his leg as he raises his sleeve to wipe the sweat gathering on his forehead. But before he could comment on anything, he heard a pair of hands applauding them.

George's eyes snap upward in a question that was immediately answered in the form of a person.

Sure enough, seated in the chair beside the door was the lanky, hooded Dream, hands clapping together in some kind of approval George wasn't sure he wanted. His eyes narrowed.

"When did you even *get* here?" George mutters as he swore he didn't hear the door open. But then again, he was so far into the zone of their song that he probably wouldn't notice if someone took the shoes off of his own feet.

"A few minutes ago," Dream says. George scowls.

"Relax," Sapnap drawls, "I invited him here. I figured he could give me a few pointers."

"Yeah," Dream responds, green eyes narrowing on George. He noticed enough movement under Dream's black mask that he figured he was smirking at him. "*Relax*, Georgeie."

George scoffs, "don't fucking—"

"That sounded really good," Dream says, lifting himself onto his feet and slowly pacing closer to the others. He somehow gracefully avoided tripping over the tangled amp chords on the ground.

"Thanks, man," Quackity says, messing with the volume of his microphone. It had been a little too quiet during the song.

"I messed it up," Sapnap says.

"That's only natural," Dream responds, shrugging. "It happens. You know, you gotta mess up a B minor chord every now and then." Dream shoots a look to George, who was *seething* at how smug Dream's eyes looked. It was kind of incredible how much George was learning to read Dream's emotions solely off of his eyes.

“Do you have any pointers, though?” Sapnap questions, twirling his drumsticks between his fingers absently as he spoke. Dream hums. Despite Sapnap being the one speaking to him, Dream seemed interested in walking closer to George. George sighs. Dream really liked getting a rise out of people, didn’t he?

“I dunno. You sound really good, dude.” Much to George’s dismay, Dream leans down, picks up George’s half-drunk coffee from where it sat on the guitar amp, and turned it over in his hands. “Coconut milk?”

“Yup,” George says, giving the upper strings of his guitar a half-minded strum. But, he watches incredulously as Dream turns to the side, tugs down his mask, tips his head back and fucking *gulps* down his coffee. George’s mouth opens in disbelief as he’d like to believe this was a prank, but the sight of Dream’s Adam’s apple bobbing reflected that he had, in fact, drank George’s coffee. The little piece of shit tugged his mask back up, set the now-empty cup down, and cringed.

“That’s kinda gross,” Dream reviews. George scoffs.

“Maybe you shouldn’t go drinking other people’s coffee, then.”

“Maybe you shouldn’t put fuckin’ coconut cum in your lattes.” Dream’s eyes crease enough to show that he was grinning. “Aren’t you gonna get mad at me, Georgie?”

“Isn’t that what you want?” George shoots back.

“Maybe.”

“Then no, I’m not getting mad at you.”  
Dream huffs a laugh. “You’re funny.”

“You’re not.”

“Dream,” Sapnap interrupts. “I didn’t invite you here to flirt with George, I invited you here to *help* me, man.”

George’s face heats. “We were *not*-”

“Well first,” Dream says, leaving George as if he hadn’t been terrorizing him for the past few minutes, “the reason your stick hit the side like that was because you lost your grip for a second. Mind scooting over?” Sapnap scoots over enough for Dream to sit, who was speaking in the foreign language of drums and hand positioning and grip, yet Sapnap seemed to understand as he nodded along vigorously. Personal reservations aside, it was nice to see someone who was able to give his bandmates pointers.

Even if it was Dream.

Not that he’d ever *tell* him that, of course.

“Could you demonstrate that?” Sapnap asks Dream. “I always trip up on that one part, I wanna see how you do it.”

“Sure,” Dream offers. George sighs. The show off. He’d probably been waiting for Sapnap to ask him to play. “Let’s take it from that guitar and drum solo, alright?”

George gives him an abrupt nod, listens to the click of the *one-two-three-four* of the drumsticks before they dive into the solo mercilessly. After a few seconds, Karl joined in as well, but the real spotlight was on the guitar and drums.

George threw a glance over to Dream and how irritatingly effortless his movements were. He watched how his grip never so much as loosened unless he wanted it to, how his eyes were trained on his drums with the occasional glance up to George. How could he see anything with his hood in his face like that?

Then Dream messed up.

Anyone with an ounce of understanding of drumming knew it was on purpose, merely because Dream locked eyes with George and hit the side of the drum, yet it was entirely deliberate.

Out of habit, George's finger slipped on the fret, falling too close to the fret and causing the ugly, unintentional muted sound of the chord instead of the hearty strum that should sound. George curses under his breath before breaking their eye contact.

But then he does it *again*.

George felt helpless as his mind felt out of control. He felt like it was pointless trying to prevent the inevitable slip of his fingers and the ruined chord that followed. But Dream just looked back at him innocently.

He was really getting on his last nerve.

But Dream seemed to be enjoying it.

Once the song was over, George sets his guitar down without bothering to switch off the amp and instead whirls on Dream.

"What the fuck?" George spits.

"That's your weakness, isn't it?" Dream questions. "You can't help it, right?"

"No shit, Sherlock," George retorts.

"Don't get all pressed about it," Dream laughs. He had the damn audacity to *laugh*? "I'm trying to help you."

"I didn't *ask* for your help," George says through gritted teeth. "If you think you can come in here, drink my coffee and purposely make me mess up, you can take your head and shove it up my a--"

"That is *quite* enough," Sapnap interrupts. "Seriously, guys. Take your sexual tension somewhere else. We're trying to practice here."

"So am I!" George bursts.

"Well," Dream sighs, wordlessly handing the drumsticks back to Sapnap. "If you ever get over your own pride enough to ask for some help, shoot me a text, George."

Why did George feel like Dream was talking about a lot more than music?

George gulps.

Maybe he overreacted.

He was just so tired.

Despite the fact he was always sleeping, he was so, so tired.

George sighs.

“Let’s take it from the top, then.”

---

College classes and after-class rehearsals crawled by slower than ever as the impending excitement of the first face-off awaited The Feral Boys on Saturday.

As the club announcers, Tubbo and Ranboo (who didn’t look even close to legal drinking age, but no one said anything) informed, eight bands were participating. Similar to March Madness, bands faced off in randomized brackets. With each victory would come a new opponent until there was a final face-off four weeks out.

Unsurprisingly, The Feral Boys and The Dream Team were on opposite ends of the brackets, meaning if they each won twice, they would be the two bands to face off in the end.

The judgement of which group won consisted of three elements: the audience, the Ranboo/Tubbo duo, and Schlatt himself.

But George was panicking.

They weren’t late this time, thankfully, and actually showed up early enough to walk up to the back door without sprinting and run the song once backstage. But there was one small problem.

Everyone was scattered; Karl was tuning his bass, Sapnap was practicing the specialized drumstick grips that Dream had showed him for the millionth time that week, Quackity was setting up the monitors and amps on stage. They had seven minutes until they were on.

George was tasked with tuning his guitar and getting Quackity some tea as his throat felt a little dry, but there was a problem.

In the middle of tuning his A string, the string snapped. Now. Of all times.

George watched as the metal gave out, stretched too far until it inevitably broke. “Shit,” George mutters, “shit shit shit-”

He checks his watch. Six minutes. Maybe he could fix his guitar that fast, but there was no way he could fix his guitar *and* make Quackity’s tea. George feels his heart heavy in his chest as he looks out to see the rest of his bandmates bustling around the dark stage, and listen to the distant murmurs of the small but wide crowd of people waiting for them.

George gulps.

*Think, think, think. There’s no time to waste.*

George grips his hair between his fingers.

This was his fault. He wasn’t going to make Quackity suffer.

So, he sets down his guitar, and rushes to the back room, pushes past performers and sets his instrument on the line to get their lead singer his tea. His hands shake as he pours in the hot water and the tea bag, fumbles with the lid as he presses it onto the cup. Four minutes.

George stirs the drink hastily and rushes out onto the stage to hand the beverage to Quackity, who winces at the taste but gives George a thumbs up. “Thanks my guy,” Quackity says. “Lifesaver.”

“No worries!” George shouts over his shoulder as he bustles off the stage. He left his guitar on the bench, right in the open. Why did he do that?

Once George pushed aside the curtain on the side of the stage, and sure enough, the bench was empty, and very void of his guitar. George feels sick. So, so sick.

He mutters a chorus of *shit, shit, shit*, as he kneels down to look under the bench, over the bench, on other benches, asking people desperately if they’d seen a black Stratocaster anywhere-

He feels a tap on his shoulder, and whirls around.

“Have you seen my- oh.” It was Dream. “Look, I really don’t have time for this right now, I’ve lost my guitar and I can’t fucking find it and I’m supposed to be on in a minute and the string broke-”

“George,” Dream interjects, but George was too far into his rambling.

“And Quackity needed tea so I didn’t have time to fix it and now the guitar’s lost and-”

“George!” George sighs, irritated, about to snap at him before Dream holds the guitar in front of his eyes.

Oh.

“Where did you- wait.” George takes the guitar from him and looks at the neck of it to see that, sure enough, there were six strings perfectly intact. “Did you... fix this for me?”

“Yeah,” Dream says nonchalantly. “Just a broken string. No big deal.”

George suddenly feels very bad as he had been two seconds from grabbing Dream by the neck. Actually, that was an incredibly nice thing to do, especially as Dream had likely been busy rehearsing for his own performance tonight.

“Oh,” George breathes. “Thank you.”

“It should be all tuned up, too.”

George looked into Dream’s face. Well, as much of it as he could see, anyway. In that moment, George wished he could read what Dream was thinking, or at least have a clue. He really couldn’t figure him out.

“Why are you helping me?” George asks genuinely, ignoring the chants from the crowd on the other side of the black curtains. Usually, when people helped George, they were expecting something in return.

George learned that much from his parents.

But here Dream was, this guy he made out to be an asshole, going about fixing his guitar for him and handing it back to him without asking for anything in return. George was ultimately baffled. Was this the same pretentious prick he’d seen preform a week ago, and the same guy who crashed his band practice on Monday?

Dream shrugs. “What, you think I’m gonna let you guys lose over a lost guitar so I don’t get to beat your ass at the finish line? Please, I’d think you’d know me better than that.”

George exhales out a relieved laugh. “Whatever,” he says. But as he steps forward to be on the other side of the curtain, where the spotlight was bright and a small ocean of people would gawk at

him, George paused to look back at Dream. “Thank you,” he says genuinely. Dream opens his mouth to likely say something like *it’s no big deal*. “Really,” he repeats. Dream silences.

“Does this mean you think I’m funny, now?” Dream says obnoxiously. George rolls his eyes.

“You wish.” George peels the curtain aside enough for himself to step through, and instantly, the light seeps in to bathe both of them in the yellow brightness of the spotlight. Though he was nearly blinded by the bright rays, George could see Dream’s glimmering eyes clear as day.

“Don’t mess up that B minor again,” Dream teases.

“Don’t pay off the bouncer,” George retorts, yet as he closes the curtain, he swore he could hear Dream’s voice murmuring *good luck* before the curtain swung closed.

Dream had to be the most confusing person George had ever met.

But once George strummed the first chord, he realized the guitar was perfectly tuned after all.

(Spoiler alert: The Feral Boys saw victory, an agreement unanimous between Schlatt, Ranboo and Tubbo, and the entire audience. One step closer to San Diego.)

This would be a peaceful end to the night for George if not for the text that flashed across his phone screen just as he was about to shut it off.

**Dream:**

Hey

You owe me

But you know that, right?

**George:**

Do I?

**Dream:**

I think you do

**George:**

How the fuck did you get my number?

**Dream:**

Sapnap

George mentally curses his roommate. So Dream didn’t tune up his guitar for nothing after all.

**Dream:**

Well

I could use an extra guitar on 505

**George:**

Aren't you facing off with that song next week?

**Dream:**

Yup

**George:**

And why should I help you eliminate your competition?

**Dream:**

I know you want to go against me just as much as I want to go against you, George

George paused his typing at that.

So what if he had the burning curiosity of what it would feel like to go against an opponent that was well-matched instead of creaming some beginner group?

**George:**

Whatever

I guess I owe you anyway

**Dream:**

Thanks

George sighs. Dream really had him wrapped around his finger, didn't he? And George was sure he knew that.

**Dream:**

But if you really don't have time, it's fine

**George:**

We both know you don't mean that

**Dream:**

Ahah

You caught me

We're practicing Wednesday morning



**George:**

That's nice

**Dream:**

You should come

**George:**

I'll bring you a coconut cum latte, how does that sound?

**Dream:**

Omfg

You're so annoying

**George:**

That's rich coming from you

**Dream:**

Yeah yeah

See you Wednesday

George sighs, clicks off his phone, and sets it beside him.

Why was he letting Dream play with him like this?

Why was he letting Dream walk all over him without much fight?

Only time would tell.

Chapter End Notes

still not recovered from the George lore stream wtf

## Chapter Notes

a nice long chapter :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

***Dream***

The atmosphere was perfect tonight.

The temperature was the kind of cold that was more calming than uncomfortable, giving off a perfect breeze from where the apartment window was open across the room.

Dream hummed as he flipped through the small shelf under his desk, knees pressed against the carpet as he peeled the shelf for the perfect record. He used to have a bigger collection when he was in high school, a selection wide enough to fill more than a small cabinet. A selection wide enough to take up rows of bookshelves.

Music had always been an escape.

Dream's finger pauses on the binding of one particular album: bright letters on a blue background, a compilation of the biggest hits from Frank Sinatra & The Four Seasons. A reminiscent smile finds his face as he pulls the thin album from the stack, tugs out the vinyl disc with care, and sets it on his awaiting record player. With a curiosity, Dream watches as the needle drops onto the center of the record, right in time for the classic "Bye Bye Baby."

Dream finds himself laying on his bed, eyes closed, immersed in the thick layers of the music from the late 60s. Sometimes, Dream wished he could open his eyes and be in a world where girls wore vintage dresses and guys suited up in bright colors that probably didn't match by today's standards.

Dream loved the scratchiness of the record, the fuzziness in the sound as back then, they didn't have the technologies of the twenty-first century.

This album was always his dad's favorite.

Dream cracks a smile as the song changes, equally upbeat and true to the decade of the 60s. It was easier to think about his parents now that they were gone, stateliness away, unable to catch him in their clutches and dance him around like their puppet. It was easier to sort out the good times from the bad now that he was in control. Their numbers were blocked. They had nothing on him, not financially, and not emotionally.

Dream sits up enough to catch his reflection in the mirror across from his unmade bed. The sounds of the happy record faded as he looked at himself.

Maybe there was a reason why he kept his identity sealed from the SMP.

He'd like to tell himself it was because of similar reasons to Bad, who simply liked to keep his college and night lives as separate affairs. He'd like to tell himself that it was only because he

didn't want to be recognized.

But Dream was afraid, in reality. He runs a thumb over his own cheek, over the flaw he'd spent so long trying to cover. It was futile.

Dream looks away from the reflection and looks back to his ceiling. The breeze felt cool against the warm skin of his mostly bare legs and arms, yet he didn't find himself crawling into the blankets of his bed to block it out. Instead, he looks up to the blue-tinted ceiling from his LED lights, and lets the music wash over him again.

Maybe his collection of vinyls wasn't as wide as when he lived with his parents.

But he was happier like this.

---

"Well, look who bothered to show up."

The shutting door of the muted practice room alerted the band of a new presence that Dream honestly wasn't fully expecting: George.

George nudged the door shut behind him with his heel as he looks to the group through hooded, sleepy eyes. His hair looked as if it was defying gravity, and aside from his sweatpants, these seemed to be the clothes he had slept in. Dream raises a brow at him, but George holds up a finger to silence him.

"Not dealing with your shit," George says, unzipping his guitar case and slinking onto a stool to begin tuning the instrument, "it's too early for that." His voice was scratchy. Had he just woken up?

"I like this guy," Wilbur offers.

Dream chuckles, and shakes his head a little. "Alright then. Shall we?" He gives his snare a little tap.

"We shall," Bad answers, adjusting the volume knobs on his bass.

The reason Dream asked George to be on this song was because, in many recordings, The Arctic Monkeys had two guitars playing. In order to fully capture the song, especially at the beginning, he figured they would need two guitars to replicate the sort of call-and-response between the two guitars on the original recording of 505. Maybe they could figure something out between Wilbur and Bad, but Dream decided having two guitars would be the best.

And he happened to know a really, really *really* good guitarist, despite his never-ending sassiness and willingness to put Dream in his place.

George was doing more of a back-up sort of thing, strumming chords in the background of Wilbur's notes on the guitar and singing.

The song started great: just George, with his reverb pedal and soft chords before Wilbur came in with vocals. Dream loved the layering of this song, how each instrument had its debut. After the introduction of the drums came the bass, and eventually, the top layer of Wilbur's guitar.

Despite being half-asleep, George didn't miss a beat, and in turn, neither did anyone else. Bad's finger slipped on his fret briefly, but despite George's pinkie finger twitching, he didn't respond to

it. Dream hums in interest.

George had to be the most interesting musician he had ever laid eyes on.

Experimentally, he lets his drumstick hit the side of the snare with an unpleasant *clack* sound. Yet George still doesn't falter; he only shoots Dream a glare.

Dream, on the other hand, was impressed.

When he had done that last week, George had been entirely thrown off.

Had George been training himself to fix that flaw ever since Dream had called him out for it?

*"But I crumble completely when you cry-"*

Obviously, the climax of the song had to be the best section of it as Dream heartily played along to Wilbur's increasing vocals and guitar, and as the finishing instrumental section approached, the band felt cohesive and intact even with a new member present. Dream's ears were peeled for the soft backgrounds of George's guitar, yet he only caught a few minor errors. Pretty impressive as he likely had only begun learning the song a few nights ago.

"Not bad," Wilbur says into the microphone. "Not bad at all."

"You guys sound really good," George says absently as his fingers briefly review a few of the chords Dream noticed he had missed. He didn't say that, though.

"So do you," Bad compliments.

"Yeah," Wilbur agrees, yet his voice became muddled until he coughed briefly, shielding his mouth behind his fist.

"Are you alright, Wilbur?" Bad says, concerned laced deep within his tone. George's brows furrow. A sick vocalist was the kiss of death to a band like this, especially when they had less than four days before their performance. Not just any performance. The performance to seal a career-changing deal.

"Yeah yeah, don't worry," Wilbur insists. Dream glances over to Bad, exchanging a worried glance as Wilbur's voice certainly sounded nasally now that he thought about it. "Just had something in my throat."

Dream watches as George digs a hand into his bag before pausing and fishing out a small box of tea. Dream recognized it as the same kind George had fetched for Quackity a few nights back. "Here," George offers, setting four of the tea bags in Wilbur's outstretched hands. "I give these to Quackity whenever he feels a little sick."

"I'm not sick," Wilbur insists. He must feel the weight of the entire room's stares on him as he admits, "maybe a little, but I'll be fine."

"You'll definitely be fine if you have one of these a day," George urges. Wilbur eventually nods and stores the tea bags into his own satchel bag.

"Thanks," Wilbur says.

Dream found it fairly endearing to see George, who had been so reluctant to attend this practice in the first place, tending to a band that wasn't his own.

“Let’s run that again,” Dream says. The band hums in agreement.

There was something interesting in how well George blended into this scene.

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Miraculously enough, George was right on time.

No broken guitar strings, no tea-making. It seemed he’d broken his curse.

“Check check,” Wilbur murmurs into his microphone. Front and center of the worn stage. Wilbur’s weary voice echoes as it should. Dream watches over the group as Bad tunes his fourth and final string, George gives his guitar an experimental strum before giving Dream a thumbs-up, and Wilbur nods.

“Are you sure you’re alright?” Dream murmurs to Wilbur as he passes him to test the monitors. Even in the dim, near-black lighting the stage was bathed in, Dream could see the feverish flush gathering on the vocalist’s cheeks and forehead. His eyes seemed unfocused as well. “Seriously, I’m sure we can figure something out-”

“No,” Wilbur presses. He gives a weak cough before taking a hearty sip from the paper cup of tea he held in his hands. “Trust me, Dream. I’ll be fine.” Dream gives him an unimpressed look. Wilbur sighs. “I promise I’ll rest the second the song is done. I’ll even go home after this. Bad can drive me home.”

Dream looks at him skeptically. On the outside, The Dream Team seemed like a typical group of college guys making music together, but to Dream, they were a lot more than that. He wouldn’t go so far as to say they were like his family, but he felt as if this was *his* group, a delicate community all three of them had worked hard to forge. So he couldn’t help but feel a family-like sense of responsibility over the wellbeing of his bandmates.

“Fine,” Dream mutters. “Just… don’t be stupid.”

“I’ll try,” Wilbur says. He gives a weak smile before he steps in front of the microphone, holds his thumbs-up high for the sound and light booth workers overhead to see, before all at once, the lights clicked on.

Dream takes his seat behind his drum set, settles into his usual seated position. There was a certain buzz that was irreplaceable in any other setting, a feeling of being wanted and wanting to prove to this sea of strangers that he could *do* this.

George stands, black and blue strap keeping his guitar snug and close to his body in a small signal that he was ready. After the cheers of the crowd died into a dull buzz, Dream gave George an affirmative nod. Taking a visible breath, George strums the first chord. They had only practiced together as a group once on that Wednesday morning as the other slots The Dream Team used to practice clashed with George’s classes and practice times with his own band.

But Dream swore that chord sounded even better than when George had played with them on Wednesday.

Wilbur leans into his microphone, and any worries Dream harbored seemed to fade away as, expectedly, Wilbur delivered on his promise to perform well.

*“I’m going back to 505*

*If it's a seven hour flight or a forty-five minute drive*

*In my imagination, you're waiting, lying on your side*

*With your hands between your thighs."*

Once George strummed and the drums picked up for the following verse, the audience responded to this excitement with their own swaying and cheering. Dream felt himself grinning under his mask as Wilbur's guitar joined the scene, the delicate yet sturdy top layer the song needed as the energy built and built to eventually reach to that instrumental climax at the end.

*"Stop and wait a sec*

*When you look at me like that, my darling, what do you expect?*

*I'd probably still adore you with your hands around my neck*

*Or I did last time I checked."*

Dream's grin grows as the light switch from their default, blinding white to a softer red, marking the shift from the softer chorus to the slowly higher energy, higher capacity of the third verse. Dream relished in the feeling of his rings dragging against his drumsticks as he reached for the snare drum, still maintaining the delicate background that served Wilbur's vocals and lead guitar. The excitement building in every band member, even the somewhat reluctant George, practically radiated off of the stage and seeped into Dream's veins as they transitioned from the repeated first verse into the instrumental before the climax. As they did so, the lights switched from the light red to a more bold shade, making Dream's stomach turn in anticipation. His hands practically twitched with the suspense, and the itch to make these drums come to life.

But then it went wrong.

Dream, from over the hem of his hood, watched as Wilbur's footing faltered, watched as his lids fluttered, how he breathed heavy and seemed to nearly topple over before promptly catching himself. He looked even more feverish than when they began, his face flushed entirely with an unpleasant, sickly pale pink.

Wilbur's hooded glance flicked over to Dream, whose head jerked to the side as a final plea for him to leave the stage. Telepathically, Dream was trying to say *sit down, Wilbur, we'll figure this out*. For once, Wilbur listened, and he saw himself off the stage, guitar rejected on the stool and his body practically collapsing onto the bench just out of sight of the audience. Dream's heart pounded. What should he do? Should they stop so he can check on Wilbur? Anxiously, he glances over to his bandmate, who gives him a weak thumbs-up.

As they locked eyes, Dream knew what he was saying: *go on without me*.

This all couldn't have taken place over more than a few seconds, yet Bad, George, and Dream were glancing to each other in a panic as the small instrumental before the pinnacle of the song was coming to an end. The audience was murmuring amongst themselves, likely questioning the whereabouts of the vocalist.

What were they meant to do without their vocalist and their lead guitarist?

Dream and the audience's questions would soon be resolved once Dream hit the snare that marked the final beat of the instrumental.

*“But I crumble completely when you cry-”*

Immediately, Dream’s head snapped up at the sound of a strong guitar absolutely *killing* the lead chords and riffs of the song, and the voice that followed.

A voice he’d never heard before.

Dream squinted as the figure seemed situated just in front of where the lights were, making a blinding halo around his form. But once the dust settled, Dream saw the figure.

*George?*

Dream nearly messed up the next beat in utter shock. Why didn’t George tell anyone that he could sing like that?

*“It seems like once again you’ve had to greet me with goodbye*

*I’m always just about to go and spoil a surprise*

*Take my hands off of your eyes too soon.”*

His voice was so strong, so warm, so unique and so very George that Dream felt like he couldn’t breathe. He could see the thin sheen of sweat on the back of George’s neck as his voice hardly even strained over the higher notes, yet producing this gritty, raw quality that Dream had never heard captured before.

He was absolutely *intrigued* with George’s ability.

*“I’m going back to 505!*

*If it’s a seven hour flight or a forty-five minute drive*

*In my imagination, you’re waiting, lying on your side*

*With your hands between your thighs*

*And a smile.”*

At first, Dream’s momentary awe broke as he realized that previously, George had only served as a backing guitarist and didn’t know Wilbur’s part of the song, yet once again, George surprised him. Even the audience was dead silent with shock as George’s vocals still hung heavy and beautiful in the atmosphere until George leaned back enough to work his fingers to the higher and higher frets of his guitar and absolutely nail the solo that followed.

He learned Wilbur’s part? Just in case?

It was in this moment that Dream decided that George was the single most impressive person he had ever met.

Once the final notes of the song hung in the air, Dream, Bad, and George practically panted with effort. Dream could feel the soreness in his forearms and the dull ache under his thighs from pressing into the stool for so long, but Dream felt as if his entire body was buzzing with energy.

Momentarily, the crowd was absolutely silent.

Until all at once, they exploded with applause and cheers and screams of approval that made

Dream's heart swell to twice its size. Bad looked over to George incredulously, set his bass guitar down, and motioned for George to say something into the microphone. Usually, that was Dream's job, but he figured George had earned it.

"Thank you," George says simply, breathless, voice a little rasped from the taxing vocals he'd just provided, before the lights promptly shut off.

"Holy shit," Dream bursts. "What the- you can sing?"

"Yeah," George says simply. "I guess so."

"You- you *guess* so?" Dream bit his tongue before he gushed about George's abilities more than he already had. But his head was replaying George's voice in his head like a broken record he'd never get sick of.

"That was awesome!" Bad exclaims as he shakes George by the shoulders. George grins bashfully from where he was unplugging his guitar from the amp, but his expression seemed somewhat conflicted. Dream frowns a little.

"I'm gonna go check on Wilbur," Bad says eventually.

"Yeah yeah, go ahead, George and I can pack up." Dream catches a glance to Wilbur, who was still sitting on the bench of the stage. He exhales in relief once he sees that a good deal of color had returned to Wilbur's face, and he seemed to be in a lot better condition. He figured a good sleep and a calm Sunday would do the trick for him, but he made a mental note to bring over some food to his apartment the following afternoon.

"You learned Wilbur's part?" Dream asks as he goes about unplugging instruments and picking up Bad's bass guitar. George shrugs.

"Yeah, I did." How was he so nonchalant? "It... it wasn't that big of a deal, it was a fun song to learn after all."

Dream hums, turns back to his own work before he hears George suck in his breath. His eyes flicker over to see where George was unplugging the amp chord from his guitar, yet left behind on the chord were two imprints: blood.

"Are you bleeding?" Dream says more quickly and with more concern than he would've liked.

"Uh," George says unconvincingly. "No, it's fine."

Dream gives him a skeptical look before harnessing his quick reflexes and picking up George's hand from his side.

"Hey!" George bursts, "I said I'm fi-"

He quiets once Dream turns George's hand over in both of his own. It was his left hand, the hand that pressed into the fretboard of his guitar. He brought George's hand closer to his face to inspect where the bleeding was coming from until he found the source: his fingertips. On his index, middle, ring, and pinkie fingers were significant indents from the strings, which was typical after having a long practice with a guitar, yet it seemed that George didn't allow himself any rest time.

He quite literally practiced until his fingers bled.

It wasn't a deep wound or anything, only surface level bleeding, but Dream frowned. A guitarist



like George must have years of callouses build on his fingertips that would make it hard to get so much as an ache. He must have practiced inhumanly this week to earn this.

Then the more idiotic side of Dream's brain kicked in, the side that was thinking about how warm George's hand was. How small it was in both of his own. It was a little clammy, but that was to be expected after a performance.

George rips his hand away from Dream's grip bashfully. "Leave me alone," George mutters. "It's-it's fine. It doesn't hurt or anything."

"Sure. Pick up your guitar, c'mon, I'm gonna fix you up." Dream didn't recognize the words coming from his own mouth, yet made no effort to take them back.

"I literally told you it's nothing-"

"George," Dream interrupts. He feels his own temper fluctuate with irritation at how extensive George's pride seemed to be. "Shut up and let me help you."

Against Dream's predictions, George purses his lips, quiets, and sighs in defeat. "Fine..."

"There we go. That wasn't so hard, was it?"

George gives him a scrunched, sarcastic smile, "don't be an ass about it."

Once they finish packing up, they visit Wilbur backstage, who was going to let Bad drive him home. Much to Dream's prying, Wilbur insisted he only felt a little light-headed (and almost fainted), but promised to go to sleep as soon as he was at his apartment.

Dream felt bad for not seeing the performance of their competition as it didn't seem respectful to not so much as view their song, even if Dream was 99% sure The Dream Team won after the show George put on, but he figured that George's bleeding fingertips were a more pressing matter.

"Where are you taking me?" George whines, trudging in the parking lot after him. Dream rolls his eyes.

"Don't be so dramatic," Dream says, digging out his car keys and giving them a click to briefly illuminate his old Chevy truck's headlights into the dark. "I have bandaids in my car."

"You drive a truck?" George asks as he leans his guitar on the side of the vehicle and slips into the passenger's seat.

"I do," Dream says. "What, you gonna make fun of me for it?"

"Maybe later," George admits. Dream exhales a laugh as he slides into the driver's seat. The lights click off as he leans over to pull out the small box of bandaids from the glovebox.

"Hold out your hand," Dream commands.

"I can do it myself," George challenges, yet their staring contest lasted long enough that George eventually groaned at, with great reluctance, held out his right hand.

Delicately, Dream picked up George's hand in both of his own, an action that first made George twitch in surprise before he stilled and relaxed a bit. Dream was careful as he applied bandaids to each finger, feeling a pang of guilt every time George would wince a little.

"Doesn't hurt, huh?" Dream says, though his teasing tone had a good deal of concern to it. George

rolls his eyes.

“Not really- ow! What the hell!”

“You shouldn’t do this to yourself, you know,” Dream mutters, applying the third bandaid to George’s ring finger. George’s hand twitches slightly. “How much did you practice this week?”

George opened his mouth, likely to lie, but then quickly shut it. “A lot,” he confesses. “I know I shouldn’t have, but hey, it paid off, didn’t it?”

Dream hums. “I guess so.”

There’s a silence, an awkward silence as George silently slips his hand from Dream’s hold and Dream drums his hands against his knees. Before George had pulled his hand away, they had been so close, close enough that Dream could practically feel the heat coming off of George’s body.

“I should go,” George blurts. *No, you shouldn’t.* “Sap is gonna drive me home.”

Dream holds his tongue as he was about to offer him a ride. “Oh, okay.”

There’s more awkward silence.

“Thanks, by the way,” George forces out. “For... y’know, patching me up.”

“No problem. It was kind of my fault, anyway.”

“Why?” George asks.

“I made you perform with us in the first place.”

He swears he can see George’s face soften a little. “You know I didn’t mind it, right?” Dream’s brows raise. “It was... fun, actually.”

“Fun?” Dream feels his own smile grow. “I agree.”

“Don’t let it get to your head, though,” George adds. Dream laughs.

“Yeah, yeah.”

Without further word, George opens the passenger door, slips his guitar back onto his shoulder, and gives Dream a final wave. Dream felt like he was pounding his fists against a locked door every time he tried to get through to George, but the frustrating part was that the door would open just a little, until Dream would blink, and it would slam in his face once again.

Dream had this instinct, this undying curiosity to get to know George more.

He sighs.

Dream ends up going back into the SMP to watch the end of their opponent’s train wreck of a performance, some weak rendition of “You Make My Dreams Come True” as sadly, the group didn’t do the old 80s tune justice. They had great potential, this group, yet the decision of which group won went without second thought.

“Congratulations, Dream Team!” Tubbo’s voice came over the speakers. Ranboo, the other announcer, awkwardly claps his hands together. “If you can win two more performances, you’ve secured your spot in San Diego!”

He was proud, really.

But he wished George was here to hear that, too.

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To say the least, Dream didn't expect his late-night Minecraft speed run to be interrupted by the vibrating of his phone. He hadn't checked the time in a while, so it could be either midnight or four in the morning and he wouldn't know the difference, yet either was an unfit time for someone to be calling him. Thank goodness Dream didn't have a roommate. He would drive them crazy.

At first, he let the call go to voicemail. The second time, he flat out rejected the call. The third time, he decided he should probably check who was calling him at the first place.

Groaning in pure irritation, Dream tears his eyes away from his screen and sees that, firstly, it was three in the morning and secondly, of all people, *George* was the one calling him.

Thoroughly irritated, Dream pauses his game and picks up the phone. "What the fuck do you want?" Dream says, voice scratchy from lack of use for the past many hours. It sounded like George was in the middle of a war on the other end. What in the world was he doing at such an hour?

There's no response, only some breathing and distant laughter from the other end. "Hello?"

Still no response. Dream sighs, deciding this wasn't his problem, and was about to hang up before George's voice crackled through the speakers,

"Dream?"

"Yeah, hi," Dream answers, making sure the annoyance in his voice was clear.

"Can you like... aha.... Pick me up?" George hiccups. Was he *drunk*?

"From where?" Dream asks, exasperated.

"There's this- Frat. Frat? Frat house. This is a Frat house, right?" George shouts to someone on the other end. "Yeah, yeah. Frat."

Dream pinches the skin between his brows. "You're drunk, aren't you?"

"No," George slurs. "Yes. Maybe."

"Oh my God," Dream groans. "Okay, fine. Give me your pin."

"I don't have a pin," George answers.

"Your *location*, dumbass."

"Ohhh, *that* pin. Aha."

Dream waits patiently until a text goes through where he finds George's location, which was thankfully only four minutes away. Once he got over the annoyance that George called him at such an hour to pick his wasted ass up from a party, he found the situation amusing. It wasn't like he was going to sleep anytime soon anyway, and he was glad George called him instead of driving drunk.

But that was the million dollar question: why *Dream*? George acted like he couldn't stand him all the time, so why him?

"I'll be there in a few minutes." George grunts in recognition. "Just... wait on the curb, alright?"

"Mhm. See ya. Dreamie."

Dream's heart skips. Why does his heart skip? "Kay."

Long story short, any suspicions that George were drunk were most certainly confirmed as true. The first piece of evidence was how dilated his eyes were. The second was how he smelled strongly of beer, or vodka, or something.

"Hi," George drawls. "Oh, you haven't got your mask on."

Dream's eyes widen slightly, and quickly, he fumbles to pull it up. He only had his hood on, yet he figured he shouldn't drive with a mask and hood as he would have bad visibility, especially when driving at night.

"Don't worry," George insists. "I can't see your face. 's all dark anyway." He yawns, "you can take your hood off. I won't look. I'll look here." He points at the window. "See? The window? So. I won't. Won't look." Dream snickers at how much George's mouth seemed to run when he was intoxicated, but as George turned his head away from him, he gathered enough courage to tug down his hood and mask. True to his word, George didn't look away from the window.

"Why did you call me?" Dream asks before he stops himself. George shrugs and leans his forehead against the cool glass of the passenger window.

"Didn't want them to see me like this," George murmurs. "All drunk. I haven't, haven't drank in a long time. I was doing good."

"Now you're not?" Dream asks, voice soft.

"No," George whispers. "Not really."

Dream starts up the car, and any irritation with the situation seemed to fade away.

Maybe he saw a lot of himself in George, even if he had no idea what he was going through. What was causing him to not be "doing good." He wondered, but didn't pry.

"How about we drive around for a bit?" Dream offers. "The city is pretty at night."

"'s technically morning," George drawls.

"Whatever. But would you want that?"

George shrugs. "Sure, sure." He figured he'd give George a little time to sober up before he dumped him at his apartment. If George didn't want "them," who he predicted to be Sappap and Karl and Quackity, to see him drunk, he guessed the least he could do was drop him off when he wasn't still drunk off his ass.

Once Dream pulled the car away from the curb in front of the bass-boasted party spilling over with intoxicated, high, horny, or all of the above college kids, he pulled out of the college cul-de-sac and into the outskirts of the city. It was dark, the moon entirely shrouded by clouds and, aside from the occasional flickering street lamp, it was pitch-dark outside. Dream turned up the volume on the Tame Impala song shuffled on his late-night driving playlist tending to the gentle atmosphere.

"I wanna fall asleep," George says eventually.

"Fall asleep, then."

"I can't."

Dream frowns. Surprisingly, he doesn't feel frustrated, though. "I'll drive until you fall asleep."

George seemed to find comfort in that as he hums, keeps his head leaned against the window, and pulls his knees into his chest. Dream doesn't even pester him for getting the dirt on the bottom of his shoes on the passenger's seat as he would to anyone else.

As song faded into song, Tame Impala to Hozier to Stevie Wonder to Rex Orange County, Dream weaved his car between neighborhoods until he drove steadily closer to the city. They didn't say much, other than comments on how pretty the sky was when it was dark like this, or how no one in the world seemed to be awake but them.

"I'm sorry I'm an asshole," George had said in the middle of an old 70s song Dream couldn't put his finger on. "I know I'm an ass sometimes."

"Wow," Dream says. "Drunk George is a lot more agreeable than sober George." Dream meant for that to be funny, but George doesn't seem to find it very amusing. "Sorry."

"You're right," George admits. "I'm sorry."

"Don't apologize," Dream insists. "Seriously. I'm an ass too. It's okay." George sighs.

"But I wish I wasn't."

"Then don't be."

There's a silence between them.

But it's comfortable this time.

"You're not an ass, George," Dream insists.

"Promise?" George murmurs.

Dream looks over briefly to see the back of George's head as the car was halted at a red light.

"Promise."

Dream was thoroughly enjoying George's entertaining drunk confessions as he figured that was his payment for picking him up at this hour. He learned that George loved waking up when it was dark and the feeling of being nocturnal even if it was only for a few hours. He learned that George loved, *loved* McDonald's. He learned that George was, apparently, constantly craving chicken nuggets and he listened to the unfortunate story of the time George walked into Sapnap's room at very *bad* timing. He stayed attentive as George recounted just where in England he was from, a little house tucked in the suburbs, a little house that was probably covered in snow at this time of the year.

There was something eerie about being the only car on the road on streets that were usually bustling with honking taxis and busy people, yet now, the roads were apocalyptically empty. Dream loved how the lights seemed so much brighter and more intense when it was pitch-dark outside, when there was no sunlight to shield the intense rays emitted from the lamps and stop

lights. Yet what was even more beautiful than the empty, dark city was the bridge connecting the city back to the college campus.

Just as they pulled onto the bridge, Dream noticed how the car speakers buzzed with a song he had never heard before. He must've reached the end of the playlist.

Yet as they drove along the stretch of road, over the water that caught all the glimpses of light it could get, away from the empty city and back to their campus, Dream found himself listening intently to the song. It was beautiful, with vocals only hummed in words he could hardly make out, but it didn't matter, for the gentle guitar and piano spoke entirely for themselves; he felt like he could cry listening to this song, like he could blast this song and somehow sing along even if he didn't know the words. Dream watched as the end of the bridge grew closer and closer, how the moment was slowly drawing to an end.

The song ended right as Dream finished crossing the bridge, and he turned to the side to ask George if he would check what the song had been called for him.

But much to his surprise, George was fast asleep, head half against the window, mouth slightly open, and eyes peacefully closed.

Dream smiles to himself.

Then he realized he had no idea where George lived.

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Dream tried to lift George out of the passenger's seat without waking him, and at first, he succeeded. But then he nearly dropped him, and things kind of went downhill from there.

"The fuck," George mutters. George, still half-held by Dream, blinks his eyes awake and looks up at Dream. "Who the fuck... huh?"

Dream's face flushes, his blood runs cold as he realized he had absolutely nothing covering his face in the moment. His skin was bare enough to feel the breeze against it, naked for George to judge and point at.

Instead, George scrunches his nose, squints his eyes and says, "are you, like, an escort?"

"Wh-*what*?" Dream wheezes, to the point where his lungs might have been deflating. Yeah, George was definitely still intoxicated.

"I'm sorry Mr. Escort Guy, I'm like... drunk, I think. Yeah. Probably. I'm not really down for that right now. But!" George holds out a finger, "if you give me chicken nuggets, *right* now, I'll consider it. Like, seriously."

Dream snorts. "I'm not an escort, George. Now come on, you seriously need to go to sleep."

"Oh," George says. "Okay." Without that ever-present stubbornness that he always seemed to have when he was sober, George slumped most of his weight onto Dream, who lugged up him the stairs and down the hall. After much contemplation, Dream decided on taking George to his own place.

Dream fumbled with his keys and opened his apartment to find Patches waiting there for him. Her head turned from Dream to the stranger he had slung around him with pure suspicion.

"Hello cat," George drawls, clearly half-asleep. "I'm George, this is my escort who isn't *escort*-ing

me 'cause he didn't get me chicken nuggets."

"Oh my God," Dream mutters, but he was suppressing laughter. "You drive a guy around for two hours and all he wants is chicken nuggets."

"Mmmmmhm," George agrees. Patches, unimpressed, flees back to her own bed, and leaves Dream to deal with George. He must've drank a lot if he was still this drunk.

"I'm gonna throw up," George mutters.

"Fuck," Dream responds. "Can you just- hold on." Dream practically drags George over to his bathroom. He felt like he was babysitting as he pointed over to the bathroom, but after all that effort, George shrugs.

"False alarm."

Dream groans. "You are a real piece of work," Dream mutters. "Whatever. You can borrow some of my clothes and shower if you want, I'm gonna crash."

"Crash what?"

"I'm going to sleep."

"Oh." George looks around thoughtfully. "Okay."

As the door shut behind George in the bathroom, Dream had the dilemma of either making George sleep on the couch or sleep on the couch himself.

Dream leaves his bedroom door open and settles on the couch, petting Patches' head as she settled beside him. "He's hard to figure out, isn't he?" Dream murmurs to her. She purrs in response.

(Dream *said* he was going to go to sleep, but really, he stayed awake until George was finished in the shower and emerged wearing one of Dream's shirts that seemed to drape off of his body, trudged his way over to Dream's bedroom, and by the sounds of it, slumps onto the bed. Now that George was safely in bed, Dream let himself close his eyes.)

## Chapter End Notes

lol imagine when George wakes up

# Out Like A Light

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

### *George*

It was safe to say that usually, George didn't wake up with something on his face.

This morning was an exception.

There had been the few mornings where George had woken up with an arm strewn over his face, maybe a pillow, maybe Sappnap.

But not something soft and fuzzy.

And *alive*.

Utterly disoriented, George opened his eyes as much as he could and patted his hands to his own face to feel that there was- a *cat* sleeping on his head. A cat who immediately scrambled off of him and retreated to the foot of the bed.

"The fuck?" George mutters, making raspberries with his lips to get the weird feeling of fur off of him as he attempted to rub his eyes awake. He wasn't too panicked as the cat hadn't scratched him, and his early-morning brain assumed this was some kind of prank. But, once he sits up, he first feels the pounding headache. "Motherfucker," he groans, pressing both hands against his temples. The world seemed woozy enough to signify him that he was very, very hungover.

He didn't even realize that he wasn't in his own bed until he opened his eyes, looked at the blankets and sheets. And the ceiling lined with LEDs he hadn't put up in his own apartment. And a small vinyl collection that was impressive but wasn't his own.

George's eyes widen.

Let's sympathize with George here. He's extremely hungover, can't remember what happened after 9 PM the previous night, and woke up in a stranger's bed. That usually only means one thing.

George sits up enough to view himself in the adjacent mirror to the bed where he notices that all he had to sleep in were shorts that disappeared under the hem of a long shirt that didn't belong to him. He bends his head from one side to the other, a small sigh escaping when he didn't see any marks or hickies. Well, that's good, at least. He wouldn't have to dig out his turtlenecks again to avoid weird stares.

He absently pet the cat that seemed to take a liking to him as his eyes gazed over the unfamiliar room. Really, he was trying to look around for cues of this mysterious person he'd (supposedly) hooked up with. She had shitty shoes, first of all. What kind of girl wore size-whatever, ratty-ass Nikes?

But the bed was empty. Maybe she had early-morning classes? George unlocks his phone to see that it was just past noon on a Sunday. This girl must have a lot of trust in him if she was willing to leave George alone in her apartment. He felt a swell of pride.

Well, that was until he cringed at the horrendous amount of missed calls and notifications from his



friends. He felt guilty as his drunk self must've left the apartment without a trace, so he was sure to shoot Sapnap a text to let him know that everything was just fine, and he would be home hopefully soon. After he solved this mystery, that is.

Aside from his moaning and groaning over the exceptionally terrible headache he was experiencing, he gently scooted this stranger's cat (the cat was so cute that he was actually considering taking her? him? it? with him and booking it) aside enough to push the blankets off of his legs. Shit. He couldn't sneak out of his hook-up's apartment with no pants. And no shoes. And a phone with three percent left on it.

Before George could consider crawling out of the window and sprinting across campus with no pants or shoes, and before he could consider taking this cat with him, the bedroom door swung open.

George pressed his back flat against the metal bed frame as if to get as far away from the figure as possible, but as he blinked his fuzzy vision to life, he recognized the faceless being immediately.

"Dream?!" George shouts. His own loud voice was fluctuating his headache, but he really couldn't help it. "I- you- that- this place is- *you?!?*"

"Good morning to you too, sleeping beauty," Dream draws, lazily holding a hand over his mouth and yawning. How was he so nonchalant about this? George's brain was buzzing by a million seconds an hour. The memories came back to him at a snail's pace; getting in Dream's car, Dream driving him around, this one beautiful song playing while they were on the bridge, waking up to Dream practically cradling him and carrying him up to his apartment- From George's perspective, the situation looked very, very bleak.

"Glad you slept well enough to shout at me again," Dream continues, body leaning against the doorframe. George's face heats. Shout at him- *again?* What the fuck happened last night?

"Again?" George says, incredulous. No way. Absolutely no way. How drunk *was* he?

"Yeah," Dream says, probably furrowing his brows at him as if he were a crazy person, but George couldn't see more than Dream's eyes from where they peaked between the expanse of skin that wasn't shielded by his hoodie and covered with his black mask. "Don't you remember?"

"No, I- no?!" George tenses as Dream *laughs*. What was wrong with him?

See, Dream was talking about how George was shouting along to the music during the night drive.

George was talking about- well, something else.

"Don't act so surprised, sheesh," Dream says, shrugging. "We had fun last night, don't you think?"

George didn't think his face had ever been so warm. He mentally smacked himself for stammering like some kind of nervous middle schooler. "Uh, well, I... guess?" Dream's eyes faded into what seemed to be a disappointed expression. George cringes. He was really messing this up, but what was he supposed to say? He couldn't remember a damn thing.

"It's just, I've never, um... well," George struggles to get his thoughts in a line, much less present them to Dream whose very presence, looming in the doorway, was patronizing.

"Never..?" Dream motions his hands as a coaxing for George to continue.

"I've never, uh," George says. "Like-" He clears his throat before blurting it all out at once, "hooked up with a guy before?"

Dream looks at him as if he'd lost his mind and told him the sky was yellow, and George could see the gears turning. George huffs, "don't act so surprised, c'mon-"

"Thanks for letting me know, I guess?"

"Don't be a dick," George mutters. The way Dream was looking at him like he was insane was making George feel incredibly self-conscious. Especially as he was sitting here wearing *Dream's* shirt in *Dream's* bed petting *Dream's* cat.

"What do you mean?!" Dream says, voice raising. "You just- tell me this out of the blue?? What am I *supposed* to say, huh? Something like- 'congrats on never getting fucked down, George!' I was begging you to tell me!"

George's face flares. "Well, come on, I figured you'd *want* to know after everything! What am I supposed to say!"

Dream rolls his eyes, arms tightening from where they were crossed over his chest, "I don't know, you could start by thanking me for looking after you the whole fucking night?"

George's face heats up even more. This was becoming ridiculous. "Wow, you're really full of it, aren't you?" What kind of person asks for a 'thank you' for hooking up? A Leo, apparently.

"I'm not the one who's full of it, George. Whose the one thinking he can call me, expect me to take care of him and then just *shout* at me the next morning for no fucking reason?!"

"Take *care* of me? Why are you *saying* it like that?!"

"Because that's what happened!"

"It was not!"

"You can't even remember shit!" Dream shouts back at him. George's headache was really flaring now. He was getting thoroughly pissed off.

"You know what Dream? I'm sorry I told you I've never hooked up with a guy because I guess I'm kind of freaking out right now and now we're yelling at each other and I can't even remember that we had- that we fucking- that we *fucked* and-"

Dream's eyes widen a little as whatever argument he had been conjuring fizzled away from him, and all George was met with was silence. George gulps. They were supposed to keep yelling. He wasn't supposed to listen to his own words echoing off of the now-empty atmosphere.

"Could you repeat that last bit?" Dream asks quietly. George scoffs.

"You know what I said."

Dream's brows raise, "well, yeah, but I'm not sure if I understand."

"Understand *what*?"

Dream clears his throat, suddenly awkward. What was going on? George could swear that Dream was blushing under his mask. "Correct me if I'm wrong, but do you... you don't think that we..." Mutely, Dream pointedly mimes the immature hand gestures of his index finger poking into the circle he'd created with his other hand. The action of George bashfully ducking his head was enough to prompt Dream to, frankly, burst into loud, unforgiving laughter.

George found himself more irritated by the action. What was so *funny*? “What?!” George snaps.

Dream was trying to get words out, but he was laughing so hard that the words only came out as strained wheezes. He was having the good kind of laugh that came from your stomach and made your head hurt.

“You think that- you think that we- my *God*, George-”

“Did we... not?” George asks in a tiny, almost inaudible voice.

“No!” Dream bursts, still laughing to the point where he had to bend over and brace his hands onto his knees. “You thought we- aha!”

“So what happened?!” George asks, trying to keep talking and get further and further away from that interaction. His face was probably beat red by now as he was sure he had never been so embarrassed in his whole life.

“You got really really drunk,” Dream starts, using his sleeve to dab at the corners of his eyes, “called me to pick you up, and we drove around for a few hours. Just vibing. Eventually you fell asleep so I ended up letting you crash here. That’s it. I slept on the couch.”

George makes a small ‘o’ with his lips as his own words came back to him. From Dream’s perspective, he had likely come in to check in on the drunk whose ass he’d been forced to drive around and whose ass was still occupying his bed half past noon, and once he had stepped into his own bedroom, he was alerted that the said drunk dumbass had never slept with a guy before and was proceeded to be yelled at.

“Oh my God,” George moans, face falling forward until it was muffled by the pillow tucked into his lap. “Dream, I am so, *so* sorry-”

“Oh you’re all good,” George heard him saying, and by the sound of his voice, Dream seemed to be grinning to himself. “Trust me, this is perfect blackmail material.”

“Don’t you dare,” George hisses, but he had to admit this was pretty hilarious. At least, it would be if he wasn’t so embarrassed that he was pondering crawling down a storm drain and starting a new life with the rats in the sewers where no one would hear about the ass he’d made of himself.

“Hm, I don’t know George,” Dream starts, “you were all like *ouuu take me Dream* and I was like *alright, get it I guess-*” George was going to beg him to stop but he was shaking with his own laughter that he couldn’t squeeze the words out of his own mouth, “imagine if we actually- *ha!*”

Once the two had died down enough, both wiping at their eyes and Dream’s cat nuzzling closer to George’s leg, the awkward silence settled in.

George was finding it increasingly harder to not like Dream now that he had fixed his guitar, fixed his hand, and wasted his entire night helping him?

It was stupid, really. They were supposed to be enemies, competitors. They weren’t supposed to sing for each other’s performances, to give each other tips, to act like they hated each other when, in reality, after barely knowing one another, they were already mutually intrigued.

George didn’t even know what Dream looked like other than the fact he was unfairly tall and had green eyes. He didn’t know what he looked like when he smiled or laughed that ridiculously contagious laugh. He had no idea.

“Thank you,” George murmurs. He was sick of saying that to him, sick of making Dream jump through hoops for him. He felt he crushing guilt as his eyes timidly looked up to Dream, who was still in the doorway. “Thanks for everything, really. I’m sorry I have to keep thanking you.”

“No worries, man,” Dream insists, waving a hand at him. “I haven’t had that good of a laugh in a long, long time.” George feels his gaze falter a little. It seems like there was something ominous behind that sentence.

“I’ll admit,” George finally says, breaking their eye contact to run a hand through the cat’s fur, “I really, really, *really* owe you now.”

He can practically hear Dream grinning. “Don’t worry, I’ll hold you to that.” George sighs a little before the silence is broken by Dream again, “so,” he says, voice soft, “you’ve never hooked up with a guy before, huh?”

George’s form went rigid, his instincts telling him to lash out in some way or another to get Dream off of his back. But then, as he ran a finger along his bandaged fingertips, something else told him to relax a little as he mumbled a shy “no.”

Dream hums. “You’re missing out,” is all he says before he vanishes from the doorway.

What the fuck is *that* supposed to mean?

---

**George:**

What was that song called

The one that played when we were on the bridge

**Dream:**

During the drive last night?

You remember that at least? Lollll

**George:**

...yes I do remember that 🤔

And yeah, from last night

**Dream:**

I don’t know actually

I was gonna check but didn’t get the chance

**George:**

Oh

That’s too bad

**Dream:**

Yeah

It was a good song tho

**George:**

Yeah

It was

---

The Feral Boys hadn't converged since The Dream Team had their eventful performance the previous Saturday, which meant that aside from energetic texts from Karl and Quackity and Sapnap demanding why George never sang from the group, demands he couldn't meet, he hadn't seen them altogether for two days. George saw Sapnap, of course, as they were roommates, but he had been too busy being hungover and sick to see Karl and Quackity.

So, naturally, the second George nudged open their practice room early on Monday morning with the usual tray of iced coffees, the entire room exploded upon his arrival.

"Holy shit, dude," Quackity marveled as he took his drink from George's arms, "you're really good. Like, *really* fucking good."

"Yeah, what the hell?" Sapnap adds, giving George a congratulatory pat on the back, "who knew that little guitarist George could also belt out vocals like that?"

"Not *little*," George protests, yet he snickers a little at the comment all the same as he leans over to hand Karl his drink as well.

"They're right, you know," a voice says behind him. George jumps in surprise, almost spilling his own coffee before he turns around with a sour look to see no one other than Dream. Great. Was he going to be a regular at their morning practices now?

"Where did you come from?!" George says incredulously.

"Your mom," Dream retorts with mind-blowing originality.

"Sweet home Alabama," Sapnap mutters. George elbows him hard enough that Sapnap cusses him out under his breath.

"I swear you just- appear out of thin air." George mimes the action with his hands. Dream shrugs.

"Aw, George," Dream starts, plucking the coffee from his hands. "You shouldn't have. For me?"

"No, you nimrod-" George starts, but Dream gives him a sly glance before tugging at his mask enough that it cupped under his chin, tipped his head back and gulped down a sizable portion of *George's* latte. Just as Dream was gagging at the bitter taste of the coconut milk, George was busy going through the wallet Dream had left unattended, carding through it until he pulled out precisely four dollars.

"What are you doing?!" Dream snaps, setting the coffee cup down with force and grabbing for George's hand. "Give that back!"

"Nope," George says, shoving the dollars into his pocket. "The latte cost four dollars. It's all yours now!" He grins at him while Dream just gives him a sour look.

“You asshole, give it back.”

“What, are you gonna get it from me?” George tilts his head, implying that the dollar bills were shoved deep into his back pocket. Dream rolls his eyes and pulls his mask up to rest above his nose once again.

“Wouldn’t you like me to,” he mumbles.

George’s face heats.

George was about to leave the conversation at that, to turn away from Dream and all the confusion that came with him, plug in his guitar and leave Dream to lurk and criticize him, but as always, his plans were foiled.

“Kinda reminds me of yesterday morning when you thought that we-”

In an instant, George leaned forward and cupped a hand firmly over Dream’s mouth as an attempt to muffle his voice, and in this moment, George realized that every pair of eyes in the room were trained on them.

George clears his throat. “Shut up, Dream,” he strains through clenched teeth. George could tell from Dream’s eyes that he was grinning coyly at him, and with a heaved sigh, George rocked back onto the heels of his feet, dug his hand in his back pocket, and pressed the four dollars into Dream’s hand.

“There,” he says. “No more coffee for you, though.”

Sapnap clears his throat.

“Okay anyways!” Sapnap says, clapping his hands together. George snaps back to life, and it seems that Dream does too as George watches him tuck the four dollars into his wallet, tug his green hood a little further over his eyes and pace away from George towards the far corner of the room.

“Thanks for coming, Dream, even if you are gonna spend half of this time with your dick halfway down George’s throat-”

George presses his fingers to his temples. He wills any patience left in his body to surface in this moment as he hears Quackity and Karl snickering at him. “Sapnap,” George strains, “it’s too early for this. Actually, *every* time is too early for this.”

“Yeah, yeah. Anyhow. What song should we run today?”

Karl hums in thought as he slips his bass guitar straps over his shoulders. “Maybe ‘Out Like a Light?’”

Quackity’s nose scrunches at the mention of the song. “My vocals don’t respond well to that range,” he admits, setting up his own guitar.

On cue, all eyes trained onto George.

“What?” George says, raising his hands up in question. “Don’t tell me you want me to sing.”

“Hell yeah, we want you to sing!” Sapnap pipes up, slinking down to sit at his drums. “George, you’re fuckin’ *good*.”

George huffs. “But- I always play guitar for that one,” he insists.

“That was before we knew you could sing,” Karl justifies. They were right. See, George was more comfortable with guitar, because he was a self-made guitarist. No spoiled memories were attached to the strings of his guitar, no prickle of remembrance every time he strummed a chord. This guitar, and everything that came with it, was completely his own.

“Besides,” Dream adds, “you need to let yourself heal.”

George scoffs and looks down to his own bandaid-covered fingertips. “That’s nothing,” he insists. “It seriously never hurt.”

“Not all wounds are physical, y’know,” Dream hums. George’s rebuttal died in his throat upon Dream’s words, any protests evaporating as he really pondered that commentary. *Not all wounds are physical.* What was he getting at?

“Besides,” Karl interjects, “Quackity hasn’t been the lead guitarist for a song in a while. This could be a nice shift in dynamic.”

George looks up to see four pairs of eyes staring back at him. He realized he had dramatized this into something it wasn’t and had made four people practically beg him just for some vocals. George felt bad. He hated making people beg him for things, hated making people go out of their way for him.

So, he sighed, set his guitar down, and stepped up to the microphone. He drifted his eyes closed, took a breath, and willed the memories and attachments to stay dormant. He failed, of course.

“Well?” George says, turning around enough to see the whole band, even Dream, gawking at him. “Let’s do this.”

---

Four more days drifted by without much thought. It felt bizarre to George to not have a song to be prepping for on his guitar and instead training his vocals up for their performance on Saturday. There were four groups remaining: two of which being The Feral Boys and The Dream Team, the pair that every audience member was holding their breath to see face off. Then were The Guitar Heroes and The Singers. The Singers were okay, having an interesting concept of four vocalists and a few instruments as backing. The Guitar Heroes were decent enough, but George wasn’t too worried.

He was terrified to face off to Dream’s group, but calculatingly, Schlatt had saved that battle off for last. If each group won their preceding competitions, that is, which no one doubted they would.

George found himself lounging on his bed on Friday, having been lazing around his room for the past few hours since his classes let out. It was somewhere around 3 in the afternoon. Sapnap was working out while Quackity and Karl were out doing God knows what, leaving George to have a quietness that was rare in this apartment, no matter the hour of morning or night.

Well, he was entirely undisturbed until a few messages pinged over to his phone.

**Dream:**

Hey

Are you doing anything?

George's brows raised at the messages. After their small squabble during their band practice on Monday, and George's lack of presence at Dream's practice on Wednesday (he didn't see the point despite Sapnap's lagging; Dream didn't ask him to, and he wasn't performing with them this weekend), they hadn't exchanged so much as a Game Pigeon over text. Not that they had been sociable to begin with.

**George:**

Not really

Why?

**Dream:**

Remember how you said you owed me?

**George:**

You love favors, don't you?

**Dream:**

You love waking up in random dudes' apartments and thinking you fucked, don't you?

**George:**

You're never letting go of that, are you?

**Dream:**

Never

But I need your help

Like.... Right now

**George:**

With what?

**Dream:**

Well my sister is coming over from Florida and I'm making her dinner

**George:**

That's nice

**Dream:**

But I need an extra pair of hands for the cooking

**George:**

I'm really not the best chef, Dream



**Dream:**

Seriously? Sapnap told me you were

George smacks his hand to his forehead. So this was Sapnap's doing, was it? He figured Dream texted Sapnap to come over and help him, but Sapnap pawned this off on George. What a guy.

**George:**

Smh Sapnap

**Dream:**

Well, whatever

I could still use your help

George stares at the white text bubbles until his eyes became unfocused, and eventually, he heeds.

**George:**

Alright

What's your address?

**Dream:**

What, you mean you don't remember?

**George:**

Stfu

**Dream:**

Lmao

And that was precisely how George found himself spending his Friday night at Dream's apartment, being yelled at as if he were an unlucky contestant on Cutthroat Kitchen, the only pleasant aspect of the experience being the adorable cat, Patches, who seemed stuck to his side at all times.

For a while, the two of them had been awkward over small things like George not knowing if he should keep his shoes on or leave them by the door, or whether he should start a conversation or let the looming silence wash over them. Yet they got into some kind of groove beyond George asking where the mixing bowls were.

"So, how old is your sister?" George asks as he takes a whisk to the bowl of batter he had in his hands.

“She’s a freshman in high school,” Dream answers. George looked over his shoulder to see Dream making some kind of stir-fry that smelled amazing. Who knew the guy could drum and cook?  
“She’s staying for the weekend to get out of Florida.”

“Ah.” George pours his milk into the questionable mixture he had going on in the glass bowl.

“What *is* that?” Dream asks with a skeptical stare at George’s bowl.

“Pancakes,” George answers matter-of-factly. “Good ones, too.”

“Oh, are they now?” Dream sets down the metal spatula he had been using to stir the contents of his pan, rolled up his sweatshirt sleeves, and stood close enough to George that their shoulders touched. He coaxes the whisk from George’s hands and gives the mixture a stir for himself. “This looks really really thin,” he warns. “And why are you making pancakes for dessert?”

“This is how they make them in the UK,” he argues, “and they make a perfect dessert, thank you very much.”

Dream snorts. “I sure hope so.” Dream swivels around, shoulders squared form focused on the preparing meal on his stove. George feels Patches brush against his legs. “Hey, I have a question.”

“Shoot,” George says, leaving the batter mixture beside the stove to cook later and tending to the pile of un-chopped green unions.

“Why don’t you like to sing?”

George freezes, and glances over to Dream, yet Dream wasn’t looking at him. Steam emerged from the pan he was using, and in that moment, George experienced another fleeting wish to see Dream’s face. Just once, so he could maybe guess what he was thinking. But he was grasping for straws. He had no idea.

George turns back around and resumes cutting the unions. He stays silent for a long time, yet Dream doesn’t prod him once. Dream was really quite patient, more patient than George gave him credit for.

“I… I sang a lot when I was a kid,” George starts. “I used to take lessons.”

“Oh,” Dream says. “That’s cool.”

“I never liked it much, but my grandma did. She always got me to sing when I played guitar.” George feels his own smile grow at the memories of his grandmother, her kind eyes he’d inherited crinkled around the edges from many years of smiling. Her hair was almost entirely white with streaks of brown. She was the one who set a guitar in George’s lap when he was four years old, the one who covered the cost of his lessons for years. She was the heart of George’s never-ending love for music. She was the very center of it all.

“How’s she doing?” Dream asks. George focuses on setting aside the green onions for Dream’s stir-fry and moved on to cutting strawberries for his pancakes.

“She’s gone,” he says quietly. “Since I was sixteen.”

Dream sucks in his breath. “George, I’m-” George feels a gentle hand on his shoulder, “I’m sorry.”

“It’s-” George was about to say *it’s okay*, yet he stopped himself. It really wasn’t okay, and they both knew that. “She had a good life,” he murmurs. “A long, good life.” It had been long enough

away from that dark, gloomy day when he received the news of his grandmother's passing that it didn't sting as much to think about. Instead, he tried his best to remember her with gratitude instead of remembering her in vain.

"Is that why you don't sing much anymore?" Dream asks. George nods mutely.

Dream didn't ask any more questions on that subject. Not because he didn't care, George presumed, but because he wasn't going to pry unwilling information from George.

Maybe that was why George impulsively took Wilbur's microphone and belted his heart out instead of letting the song be crushed under his unmoving feet. Because he looked back at Dream, the leader of a strong band, and watched as he didn't know what to do.

In that moment, George had thought *this is what Grandma would've wanted me to do*, and in some way or another, he felt as if there were a pair of eyes on him that weren't on this earth anymore.

"I sing a little, too," Dream starts, hand reaching onto the cutting board to grasp a handful of green unions and sprinkle them onto his creation.

"Really?" George tried to think of what Dream would sound like as a singer. "You'll have to sing for me sometime."

"Yeah," Dream agrees. "I will."

---

George ended up back at his apartment for the remainder of his Friday evening, but not without a Tupperware container of stir-fry and pancakes ("*crepes*" as Dream had stubbornly argued) he enjoyed for a late dinner. Dream ended up inviting George to stay over and meet his sister, but George politely declined as he had promised his band that they would run through Out Like A Light one more time before their performance on Saturday.

Later, George got a text from Dream declaring that his "British crepes" were very good. He found himself smiling.

Despite not seeing Dream's sister on Friday, he did see her on Saturday at his performance.

They were facing off against The Singers, who sang a cover of "Can't Sleep Love" by Pentatonix, which would've been lovely if the pianist knew how to play their instrument. Usually, leading with such a low-energy song in a music competition was a ballsy move, but in a setting like this where Tubbo and Ranboo were practically ready to announce their win and move on, the group wasn't too concerned.

The only nerves George felt about this performance was the fact that he didn't have a guitar in his hands. Instead, there was only a microphone. But as he found himself staring at a faceless crowd, eyes flickering over the people in search of one tall, masked man, mouth opening to sing the gentle lyrics of the song, he felt the lyrics flow from him.

*"Did your mother always seem to hate me?"*

*I'm sicker every day*

*And now I'm terrified of talking to my friends only to stay still*

*Dreaming of our first born*

*And your hair covered in popcorn-”*

The vocals weren't hard for George. They were on the lower end of his vocal range, making his throat feel a familiar, filled sensation that reminded him of the happier ends of childhood.

*“You never leave-”*

George thought of when he was sixteen and tried to open his mouth to sing, no sound escaped.

*“You never leave-”*

George thought of when he was seventeen and left the house with only his guitar on his back and his wallet tucked into his pocket.

*“You never leave-”*

George thought of when he was nineteen and met Sapnap at a frat party by chance, the person who would both save and change his life forever.

*“You leave me up tight strung*

*Up like a kite*

*Dumb, wicked, and white.”*

George suddenly comes back to life, back to his reality where he was on a stage, singing for an audience of strangers where Dream was somewhere within. He realized that his vocals were basically the only sound in the air, the crowd holding their breath, only mild guitar backing him and a nearly unnoticeable drum beat. He felt like his throat was closing, like someone was wrapping their hand around his neck and squeezing until he couldn't breathe. He swore his eyes teared up while his hands shook from where they held the microphone.

But then his eyes settled on Dream.

Dark and covered in shadows, but once he found him, his eyes wouldn't leave.

And he was looking right at him.

He had who George figured to be his sister beside him, her long, golden hair fastened into a braid. He wondered if Dream was blonde, too.

But George realized that behind these instruments were people who loved and supported him, and though they were strangers, the crowd loved him, too. He realized that he wasn't alone on this stage, and he wasn't alone on his pedestal, either. George was still trying to figure out how to raise his hand and ask for things without feeling defensive or insecure about it, still trying to rebuild the emotional bridges his past had burned down for him.

Slowly, George would realize that it was okay to need people.

But for now, he didn't stop singing.

The tears disappeared, but his smile stayed bright as he finished strong.

*“Love me in spite*

*If I betray our lonely nights spent out like a light*

*With no kiss goodnight*

*Would we ever fight when I'm away?"*

As that was the end of George's vocals aside from the falsetto "oooo"s to provide an angelic backing for Quackity's guitar solo, George felt his shoulders relax considerably.

His eyes didn't leave Dream's hardly, not when the audience clapped their hands together, not when Ranboo and Tubbo stepped onto the stage to declare The Feral Boys as the winner for this bracket.

George's throat felt raw from singing, and his eyes felt tired from being open for so long, but even as he collapsed onto his bed after a whirlwind of cramped hugs and Minecraft tournaments with his band, he didn't regret a single thing.

## Chapter End Notes

George lore pog???

# Hysteria

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

### *Dream*

The dreadful excitement didn't fully sink in until The Dream Team handed The Guitar Heroes an overwhelming defeat the following Saturday.

Where Ranboo's parting words of "best of luck to The Dream Team and The Feral Boys! May the best group win" flipped a switch of nerves and anticipation that Dream had been holding onto.

See, with every other face-off, Dream had a confidence in his group, an expectation for them to win. In ranks of abilities, his band was simply ahead of the curve of most average bands, pride aside. But this time, Dream had no idea. Any gaps, any weaknesses he swore he could see in The Feral Boys would turn out to be false; in fact, the closest he had come to finding a weakness was George's tendency to mess up along with his bandmates. However, they got over this flaw by simply *not* messing up.

It was enticingly intimidating.

"Supermassive Black Hole is the sexiest song alive," came Quackity's voice, muffled by the door.

"It's not flashy enough," came another that Dream recognized as George.

Dream nudged open the door so the band would be alerted of his presence as he was sure they were discussing which song they should perform for the final showdown, and he figured they wouldn't want him, technically an enemy, to eavesdrop.

"Oh, hi," Karl says with a friendly wave. "Good to see you here, Dream."

"Likewise." Dream slips the book bag off his shoulder and takes his drumsticks from it, slinking into his usual stool that was right between George and Sapnap. Once, he hadn't shown up to one of these Monday morning band practices with the insecurity that he was intruding on their space, but after a half hour went by without showing up, he got a few texts from Sapnap asking where he was.

Sometimes, he would give Sapnap pointers, but mostly, he just enjoyed watching another band. It was as if he was allowed a pass into someone else's world, looking at the sky with a new lens. No one minded him from what he could tell. In fact, he was something of an honorary member of this group at this point.

A voice told him that this was wrong, getting so close to the roadblock between him and the next level of his future. To see this roadblock and make friends with it.

Another voice told him that it was nice to let more people in his life. He was trying to do that, had been trying for a long time.

Even George didn't express any irritations with Dream's presence as they had fallen into an unspoken routine: Dream would set his things down, pick up George's latte, and gulp down at least a quarter of it before promptly setting it back down and minding his own business for the rest of the practice. Honestly, the coconut flavor was growing on him somewhat.

“What song do you think we should warm up with, Dream?” Karl asks. Dream hums in thought.

“Why are you asking me?” he ponders, absently drumming his drumsticks against his thigh.

“It’s good for us to have an outside perspective every now and then,” George answers as he plugs in his guitar, sound testing it with a light strum. “When someone just gives a song for us to learn on the spot, it helps our quick thinking as a band.”

How interesting. “The Adults Are Talking by The Strokes?”

The song was easy for them apart from the ending where Quackity clearly had to try with his vocals as they rose well out of his range, yet somehow, he nailed it, and as did the rest of the group. Admiration aside, Dream was terrified that in two weeks, he would go home a loser, have to fake a smile under his mask as he watched the light of his future dim with another lost opportunity.

He wanted them to succeed, really.

He wanted George to succeed.

But Dream’s need to prove himself trumped over his other emotions.

Because of the winter holidays, there would be two Saturdays before the next and final performance. Groups could still go for low-pressure gigs, just for some extra cash and practice, but there would be no official performances until after the new year. This gave them plenty of time to prepare.

Wilbur went home to Britain for a week while Bad and Dream stayed in town. On the other hand, George stayed in town while Karl, Quackity, and Sapnap went their separate ways for a few nights before returning. However, each group was so immersed in their individual practices that they hardly saw the other. Even when Wilbur was overseas, Bad and Dream would FaceTime from their practice space and attempt to practice together, even with the audio delay. The second Wilbur stepped foot onto American soil once again, the band was practically inseparable. It was hard to pick out who, out of the three, wanted to win the most; this was likely because they craved opportunities so badly that it was impossible to want this more.

Despite diving head-first into nonstop practices to the point where Dream swore his drumsticks were making his hands chafe, he did see George once over break. It was bizarre, really, as they had been in town for all this time, yet neither could find the energy (or more accurately, the excuse) to shoot the other a text. Dream looked at the small *Delivered* over the last text sent weeks ago with a growing resentment as he wished he could find a reason to reach out. A hint at mutual interest.

But he didn’t.

At least, not until Sapnap asked if Dream wanted to stop by his and George’s apartment to help him write an essay for his required English course with the promise of hot chocolate and eternal gratitude. It was a cold, windy Thursday just over a week before their performance and a week after Christmas, the temperature cruel enough to bite at Dream’s bare arms below the rolled-up sleeves of his hoodie. He was sure to check the location and address as given by Sapnap to ensure he wasn’t showing up at some random person’s apartment before knocking twice.

He half expected George to answer the door, but instead, Karl did. And as soon as the door opened, Dream’s shivering form was engulfed in the turned up heating of the room filled with light and boisterous laughter from who sounded like Quackity and Sapnap.

“Where’s George?” Dream asked about an hour into their hangout. Sapnap had a talent for helping

Dream feel comfortable in his home as Dream already had a mug cupped in his hands and his socked feet propped on the dining room table spread with Sapnap's scrawled notes.

Sapnap shrugs. "I dunno. I should probably call him again."

"It's no use," Quackity mumbles from where he was perched up on the kitchen counter, his own hot chocolate mug set down beside him, "he's not answering. Hasn't been for the past hour." Dream frowns and tries not to worry, because really, this wasn't his problem. George didn't like him, and he didn't like George.

(He was still worried, though. Wasn't he allowed to worry?)

Karl clears his throat, enough so that the room looked over to him. "I think he just needs some time."

Dream looked from expression to expression enough to deduct that they all had some wordless understanding of what was going on, but Dream wanted to know, too, only because he was curious. Definitely not because he wanted to make sure George was okay or anything like that.

"Time for..?" Dream inquires. Sapnap and Karl exchange a look.

"Well," Sapnap starts. "His mom calls, sometimes."

"What does she say?" Dream presses.

"I don't know," Quackity answers. "Nobody does. You'll ask him and he'll just go *it was nothing, Quah-kah-tee*." He mocks George's accent, yet no one seemed to have it in them to laugh. The energy was significantly more somber in a way that Dream figured had some context he wasn't aware of.

After a few more seconds of silence, Dream decided he couldn't bear it anymore.

"Where are you going?" Dream hears Sapnap call behind him. Dream nudges his feet into unlaced shoes.

"I think I know where he is," Dream says back.

---

The temperature dropped even more now that the sun was far past the horizon, making it easy for the cold to creep in undisturbed.

Dream was thankful for the extra two hoodies in the trunk of his car, both of which he shamelessly layered on. As a guy born in Florida, he really couldn't handle cold weather.

Despite the horrible weather, it turns out that Dream *did* know where George had gone off to. Really, he had been taking shots in the dark, extremely uncertain when he made this prediction.

He didn't see George at first, and had been five more paces from turning around and giving up, but he *heard* George before he saw him.

Dream had parked his car on the dirt shoulder at the base of the metal-beamed bridge connecting their college campus and the quiet town and suburbs surrounding it to the alive city on the other side of the wide river separating the two worlds. It had been the very same bridge he had driven George on when he was drunk and falling asleep, the same bridge where they listened to a



beautiful song neither could place the title on.

Dream found himself walking along the sidewalk, eyes glancing to his right where shimmering, ebony waters glistened many meters below him, almost tempting and beckoning in how the minuscule waves of the river swayed back and forth, like a siren's song. He wondered if George was like him at all. If George came to random places like this when he needed to just get *out*.

It turns out, he was, because right when Dream was about to turn on his heel and sit himself in front of a heater, he heard the unmistakable strings of an acoustic guitar.

As Dream drew closer, step by step, he recognized the soft tune as the early 90s Eric Clapton song, 'Tears In Heaven.' Dream couldn't see George yet, couldn't hear any voice or indication it was him, but he knew. He could tell by the skill and sound of this guitar that it was George who was playing it.

As the song went on and Dream continued to step closer and closer, he visualized the lyrics in his mind in time with the guitar.

*Would you know my name?*

*If I saw you in heaven*

*Would it be the same?*

*If I saw you in heaven?*

Eventually, Dream did see a shadowed figure come into view, sitting on the pavement of the sidewalk with his legs threaded through the thin bars separating pedestrians from a long fall to the river. The figure's legs dangled, taunting the waters down below. But he didn't seem to care, and instead, continue playing.

*I must be strong*

*And carry on*

*'Cause I know I don't belong*

*Here in heaven.*

By the time Dream sat beside him, George had finished playing by then, and in a minor surprise, he looked over to Dream in a hurry.

"Hi," George says.

"Hey," Dream says back.

"I didn't realize it was you, at first," George says with some sheepishness. He lays his acoustic guitar flat along his lap, yet his legs continued to sway. Dream mimicked the action, and though he often found himself deathly afraid of heights, he didn't mind this, somehow. His feet were hanging over the end of the world, the dark, black water, yet he didn't care. "With your mask and stuff."

"Oh," Dream says, now being sheepish as well, "sorry, that must've been creepy."

George shrugs. Dream watches him shiver in the small sliver of moonlight and the yellow glow of the streetlamp across the bridge, bathing George in a dim lighting that, admittedly, suited him. It reminded Dream of the dim lights of the SMP, which definitely suited him.

“How’d you find me?” George asks quietly. His voice was almost swallowed up in the breeze, but Dream heard him. Dream shrugs. He always had a way of finding George somehow.

“Just a hunch,” Dream admits as it was the truth. “Did you drive here?”

“Nope,” George says. He motions a hand out to a light blue bike leaned against the cement pillar of the wall. Dream sucked his breath in as he remembered Sapnap mentioning that George didn’t have his license. He would drive him home once they were both satisfied with freezing to death.

“So, why are you here, George?”

George is quiet for a while after Dream asks that, and a few times, Dream looked over to see if George had heard him in the first place. He had.

“I…” George trails off briefly before trying again, “I hate feeling trapped.” Dream listens to the sounds of George’s fingertips mindlessly grazing and plucking over the strings of his guitar. Dream wondered if he even realized he was doing this; it sounded beautiful nonetheless. “And I feel trapped when I’m worried I’m not going to go anywhere.”

Dream hums. Despite the vague nature of George’s comments, he felt like he had a clear understanding of what he was trying to say. A small smile pries at his lips. George reminded him of himself. “Not going to go anywhere?” Dream pushes. “What gave you that idea?” George is quiet again, but this time, it’s a bitter silence. “My mom,” he finally admits.

Dream didn’t ask anymore questions, because he already had some guesses. Guesses that George’s mom wasn’t supportive of what she needed to be supportive about and was too involved in things she shouldn’t be involved in. He was sure that George, despite his boundless abilities, didn’t go home on the holidays to a pair of proud parents who asked him to record every performance and keep them posted.

In fact, Dream was sure this was related to why George never went overseas this winter break.

“My parents are assholes,” Dream finally says to break the silence. “I know that society tells you that you can’t say that about your parents, but you can. Why not? They’re not on pedestals or anything.” Dream exhales before continuing, “if you can’t already tell, I fucking hate when people tell me what to do.” George huffs a laugh, and Dream takes that as a good sign. “So naturally, I didn’t respond well to being someone’s child.”

Dream cringed at the memories of his miserable younger self, his stubborn, ambitious, unyielding young self. “They wanted me to be some piano prodigy, so I took piano lessons until I moved out of the house. Classical piano. Always hated it.” Dream chuckles a little at the not-so-fond memories of being sat in front of ivory keys. The effortlessness of his fingers slipping up and down the keyboard without thought never became as satisfying, as rewarding as that of breezing his drumsticks across each drum. “You can imagine they were pissed when I started teaching myself how to drum. That’s about as far away from Chopin as you can get.”

“But you’re so good,” George says. “That’s bullshit that they weren’t proud of you.”

Dream raises his brows. “I could say the exact same thing about you.”

The wind gusts between them, and George clings a little tighter onto his guitar as if afraid he would drop it in the waters below. Maybe it was an instinct, for him to cling to it— an instinct to prevent someone from taking it away. An instinct Dream knew all too well. Dream looks over to George to see him shivering.

“Would you like to go?” Dream offers.

“Not yet,” George murmurs back. “It’s peaceful out here, don’t you think?”

Dream hums in agreement, but as he does so, he slips one of his three hoodies over his head. George was only in a thin long-sleeve shirt. Was he insane? He half expected George to decline the offer for the hoodie as he declined most of Dream’s help, but instead, he murmured his thanks and slipped the hoodie over his head. In this moment, Dream realized something about George.

George a tendency to decline help even when he needed it, and when he didn’t decline, he seemed resentful. Dream realized that this wasn’t because of excessive pride or an inflated ego.

It was because no one had taught George *how* to let people help him.

He had been raised to be entirely self-sufficient. Self-fulfilling.

“George,” Dream says eventually, folding one of his knees up to his chest while the other leg dangled over the edge of the world. “You know that you’re not going nowhere, right?” He feels George’s eyes on the side of his face. “You don’t need your mom’s approval to see that.”

“You’re right,” George says slowly. “It still hurts, though.”

Momentarily, Dream was at a loss of the simple poetry of George’s words. His sentences came off as abrupt at first, but in reality, each word had a story. “It does, doesn’t it?” Dream murmurs. “But it doesn’t have to.” He motions to the guitar in George’s lap. “This is *your* thing, George. Don’t let anyone take it from you.”

From the dim lighting, Dream swore he could see George smile at him a little. It was a rare thing, he noticed, a diamond amongst duds. His smile was beautiful, his laugh even more so. He wished the world did put so much weight on his shoulders.

Just as Dream was standing up to sit in his car (he’d really had enough of this cold), he felt someone grab his sleeve.

“Dream,” George says in a rush, as if to get the words out before he could take them back, “don’t-” He stands, guitar neck clasped in one hand and Dream’s sleeve clutched in the other, “don’t let your parents tell you what to do. Your stubbornness- that’s your strength, you know. It’s what makes you so good as a musician.” George clears his throat. “So. It’s bullshit that they don’t support you. You don’t deserve that.”

Dream smiles, weakly, and though he knew George couldn’t physically see the expression, by the look in his eyes he figured he knew anyway.

“Thanks, George.”

“Thank *you*, Dream.”

Silently, George looked over the railing one last time, as if bidding this memory goodbye, before he followed Dream into his car.

They drove in a comfortable silence, George’s blue bike shoved in the trunk and the guitar delicately strewn over the seats in the back. As George stepped out of his car once Dream pulled in front of his apartment, Dream looked at him one last time. He wished every goodbye didn’t feel like a farewell to this side of each other, because they both knew the next day, the vulnerability will have evaporated; the walls will be rebuilt.

Dream pulled his car into park as he watched George slip his guitar case over his shoulder, his hand resting on his bike as he lead it inside with him. Dream's green hoodie was big on George, the sleeves well past his fingertips and the bottom hem inches below his waistline.

"See you, Dream," George says.

Dream hoped he would see this side of George again as he watched him disappear into the apartment building. And as George became smaller and smaller in his line of sight until eventually, he disappeared altogether, Dream wondered if this had ever happened at all.

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The next week was a haze of insomnia and hours spent sat at a drum set, listening to the same track over and over, painstakingly mending every detail. He was striving for perfection, but so were Bad and Wilbur.

And then the night came. The night where the SMP saw the biggest crowd yet, and across the whiteboard next to the stage, names of eliminated groups were crossed out with a fateful, black sharpie line. Two names remained.

"Relax, Dream," Wilbur says, voice raised over the crowd. "We've practiced every single day for weeks, even when I was in Britain."

"Yeah," Bad says, hand reaching out to squeeze Dream's arm. "Try not to get too far in your own head, okay? We all know our parts backwards and forwards."

Dream nods, yet he feels a guilt that he, the team leader, was the one in need of comforting. He was supposed to be the face of confidence of this group, but instead, he felt as if he was cowering at his own shadow in the face of the biggest opportunity he had come across in his life. He had such a crippling fear of failure that he refused to look it in the face.

But before he could assure Wilbur and Bad that he was fine, the white lights of the stage momentarily clicked off in a signal that the group was about to perform. Immediately, the crowd silenced before flaring up with noise as soon as the lights turned back on to reveal the group in their respective places. If Dream didn't know them each personally, he would figure they were gods by the way their silhouettes were outlined by the dim blue lighting. The few feet the stage was above the ground the crowd stood on served as a reminder of the pedestal The Feral Boys truly ruled.

The audience quiets as the first notes of the song rang, which were quick notes in the upper register of Karl's bass guitar. He had an interesting distortion pedal in action, causing a strong, demanding sound to emit. He didn't miss a single one of the sixteenth notes.

Gradually, George's guitar joined in as background noise, a slow slide up the frets until he played chords with an admirable strength. But Dream had a hard time focusing on the notes George played as, once the lights brightened with the presence of the drums and Quackity's soft vocals, he could see them all clearly.

See, usually George wore a hoodie and sweats, or if he was feeling formal, jeans and a blank long-sleeve.

Not tonight, though.

He wore dark denim jeans, loosely cuffed around his ankles and a pair of black ankle Doc Martens to go with them. He also wore a black striped long-sleeve under a baggy Nirvana shirt. On top of it

all, he had two metal chains dangling around his neck, thin, big shimmering and glistening like diamonds under the brightness of the spotlight.

He looked... well, he looked *good*.

Dream figured Karl designed his outfit, or something like that, but either way, he looked really, really, really good.

Dream felt his heart catch in his throat as the song continued on, Quackity's vocals strong and unyielding along with the unmistakably difficult guitar solos and continuous baseline. To top it off, Sapnap was absolutely nailing the drums, each cymbal crash and bang again the snare perfectly calculated as controlled.

So this was the full, overwhelming capability of The Feral Boys?

Dream figured they were invincible as they reached the latter part of the song, the guitar picking up drastically. His eyes followed the quick presses of George's fingers into the frets.

*"And I want you now*

*I want you now*

*I feel my heart implode*

*And I'm breaking out*

*Escaping now*

*Feeling my faith erode."*

With the final strum of the guitar, the final pluck of bass guitar, the final crash of the drums and the ring of the vocals, the audience silenced before flaring into the loudest applause Dream had ever heard. He felt himself clapping his hands together, but he felt like he was underwater. His ears were ringing with the noise, but his eyes were dazed and unfocused as he felt like the entire world had faded into his periphery, reduced to background noise.

"Thank you, thank you so much," George's voice says, a tiny screech of the microphone following. He was breathless, sweat glistening on his forehead and hands visibly trembling with the effort he must've exerted on that song. "That was 'Hysteria' by Muse, wow- thank you all so so much for all of your support." His eyes gaze over the crowd. "Well, you're up, Dream Team."

Dream feels Bad shake his shoulders in what must be excitement before the lights turned off again. Amidst the roaring crowd, Dream tried to sort out his own thoughts.

*You're up, Dream Team.*

Dream feels the smile come to his face as he weaves through the crowd he sought to impress in a few moments.

Hell yeah, they were up.

Who do you guys think is going to win? :0

# Basket Case

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

### George

*“Why are they like that?” George snuffles. The scene unfolding wasn’t uncommon; George, young, no older than seven, with his tear-stained face buried in his grandmother’s embrace. “They’re always- always like- like this, and- and I don’t know why!”*

*“Shh,” his grandmother soothes. “You’re right, love, they have no reason to not praise your passions. You’re right, George.” She smooths a hand over his hair, coaxing the soft cries and whines from the small, naive child George had once been. Nothing serious had occurred, only the usual happenings of George clinging tight onto his guitar in hopes to show his parents a song he had learned the previous night. In short, it didn’t end well.*

*Once George gathered enough strength to pull his face back and look up at her enough to allow her to wipe the tears from his cheeks, she smiles gently at him. A kind of smile she reserved for him and him alone, a fact that kept George internally gloating whenever he saw the sideways glances his brother was spared from his grandmother. “But you must remember that. The second you don’t know if you’re right or not is the second you’re in trouble.”*

*George snuffles again. “Are Mum and Dad in trouble, then?”*

*The kind smile fades around the edges. “I suppose they are, yes.”*

*What George didn’t realize at this age was what his grandmother meant by “trouble” in this context.*

*His parents weren’t in trouble as in physical danger.*

*They were in trouble of losing him.*

*Of that, his grandmother had been entirely correct.*

*But she had been right about something else, too.*

*“Now, George, there’s something else you need to remember,” she says next. George looks up at her, big eyes wide and attentive. “When someone else isn’t right, and they hurt you, you need to let other people help you, too.”*

*“But they shouldn’t have to deal with that,” George snuffles weakly. “It’s not their fault.”*

*His grandmother’s hand cupped his face as she said, “it’s not your fault either, though.”*

---

As George clutched at the strap of his guitar case until his knuckles turned white, eyes glued on the stage ahead of him, he felt like a scared child again. Wide-eyed, foolish, hopeful.

“Look alive, man,” he hears Sapnap say, with the accompanying bump to his shoulder. “We fuckin’ nailed that performance. You know it.”

“I do,” George says slowly, voice raising as the crowd grew in their anticipation. There was something interesting and versatile about being the ruler of the crowd one moment, and the very next being within it. “But what if they nail it, too?”

Sapnap goes quiet before admitting, “they will. But y’know what, George? We’ll nail it better.”

As the stage goes dark before illuminating entirely, George feels his hands fidget with his sleeve, and god *dammit* why did he let Karl style him in such a layered outfit, he swore he was going to pass out from a heat stroke.

This feeling of intense heat only skyrocketed once the legendary Dream Team was floodlighted into vision.

Each member stood with an earned respect by the screaming audience, Wilbur tall and proud with his guitar clutched and ready in his hands, Bad’s smile visible from under his black hood, and Dream as ominous and incredible as always.

The entire room held their breath with the first few beats, strong strikes of Wilbur’s guitar along with raspy and characteristic vocals for the moody nature of the rock song.

*“Do you have the time*

*To listen to me whine*

*About nothing and everything a lad wants?”*

Sapnap and George exchange a glance that, in silence, says *no fucking way*. This song, a Green Day classic, was notorious for its insane drum line and the difficulty that every instrument, including the vocalist, had to overcome.

As of now, only Wilbur and his guitar were the sounds present on this stage, but George’s eyes darted from Bad to Dream, who he was sure were coming in any second now.

*“Sometimes I give myself the creeps.”*

How in the world did he achieve such quick guitar strokes in time with his own perfected, raspy singing?

*“Sometimes my mind plays tricks on me*

*It all keeps adding up-”*

And there were the drums as declared by the presence of the spotlight, shining right on Dream, who was the tip of their triangular formation. George really tried to squint and watch Dream’s movements, yet his drumsticks were traveling from snare to cymbal so quickly that he couldn’t hardly make out the movements. In fact, he wasn’t even capable of sounding the rhythm aloud simply because of how fast and complicated the drums were of this song.

He watched as Dream, secretive appearance and all, completely owned the stage with his relentless attacks to each beat, and he imagined how he must smirk with pride with each nailed section. George couldn’t say he blamed him.

*“I think I’m cracking up*

*Am I just paranoid,*



*Or am I just stoned?"*

Within his own analyses of each stroke of the guitar, each pluck of the bass, the following verse and bridge breezed by. Notably, Wilbur killed his guitar solo, and obviously, Dream perfected his drum solo as well.

Despite the lights being switched off with the ending of the performance, George felt like the head of the spotlight was blinding him, burning him, antagonizing him. A thin strip of sweat slips down the back of his neck. As always, the Dream Team performed with a crafted perfection.

He didn't know if his own abilities were enough this time.

"Will The Feral Boys come onto the stage, please?" Tubbo announces, soft voice screeching over the microphone. "Dream Team, stay up here as well."

The lights on the stage turn on to a mostly dimmed setting, enough that George and the rest of his band didn't trip when they walked up the few stairs from the audience floor to the stage. Somehow, George felt like the stage was a lot higher up.

"You alright?" Dream mutters under his breath as George found himself standing beside him.

"I'm fine," George insists. That was far from the truth. He was convinced he was going to faint. Dream didn't get the chance to address this, however, as Ranboo picks up the rest of what Tubbo was saying.

"No matter who wins," Ranboo starts, voice a little shaky, "both groups are incredibly talented, no matter what. Let's get it up- I, I mean, let's *give* it up for The Feral Team- I, sorry, I mean, The *Dream* Team and The Feral Boys!" Maybe if George didn't think he was about to throw up, he'd laugh at the fond yet sympathetic pat Tubbo placed on Ranboo's rigid, tall shoulder once the crowd finally processed what he had said at all and did what they did best, which was clap their hands together.

With good reason, Tubbo takes the microphone from Ranboo. "Because these are the final two, we will not be doing a simply raise-hand poll like the other times where the results were, sorry, pretty obvious. Instead, we will be having a ballot box."

Tubbo drones on about the specifics, where to find pens and paper and where the ballot box was located, George felt sicker and sicker with each ticking-by second. Was the universe here to torture him and make this take as long as humanly possible? George spares a glance over to Dream, who as always, was tall and composed. If he didn't see how Dream's hands fiddled with the bottom of his black t-shirt, he would've figured he wasn't nervous at all.

He also would've figured he wasn't nervous at all if not for the hand that tapped his, timid, before gathering the courage to entwine it as a whole. George feels his skin prickle as, first, he glances down at his own hand to find it, sure enough, being held by a particular someone who had four thick silver rings taking up his left hand, black nail polished thumb grazing over the skin of his wrist.

George doesn't need to glance to his side to know exactly who this was, yet he did anyway. Unsurprisingly, it was Dream who was the culprit, mask, hood, and shadows entirely concealing every inch of skin on Dream's face. Of course, George's instinct was to rip his hand from Dream's grip as if human contact burned him.

Instead, George decided it would be easier to let it be as there was something comforting in being

able to give Dream's hand a soft squeeze and getting the same squeeze in return. It made the knot in his chest loosen a little.

Here's the interesting thing: George has never been fond of physical touch. He hates how clammy his hand gets whenever someone holds it, how he feels swaddled and trapped and awkward whenever he was hugged. But with Dream, it seemed like such reservations were a prospect of the past. This may have been the most comfortable hand-holding George had ever experienced in his life.

Even as minutes and minutes ticked by of volunteered bartenders stepping forward and counting out the many scraps of paper with a band name written on them, Dream and George's entwined hands never loosened. Both were silent, terrified of breaking such a delicate moment, but George liked it like this. It was peaceful, holding Dream's hand and pretending like he didn't feel as if his world was going to implode.

"Uh," Ranboo starts, bringing the room's attention back to the stage where he and Tubbo stood at the front of. "It seems there is a... predicament."

"Yes," Tubbo adds intelligibly. George gulps. If both the Ranboo/Tubbo duo and the audience voted for the same group, the other would be out by default. His heart pounds in his ears as it seems that Tubbo leans back into the microphone in slow motion. "Ranboo voted for The Dream Team and I voted for The Feral Boys. We couldn't agree." George gulps. Was that even possible? "And to make things worse, it seems the audience has the exact same problem. Exactly half of the votes went to each group, and we recounted about three times!"

George feels Dream's hand tighten considerably around his, and George holds his breath as the final figure, the final determining factor stepped out onto the stage.

Schlatt.

He was tall enough, clad in a rustic suit and a permanently uninterested expression. His presence was unmistakable as his leather shoes *click-clack* against the smooth surface of the stage.

"I guess that makes me the final vote, eh?" Schlatt says into the mic. The audience gives a weak cheer. "Well then, I'll get right to it." George felt himself gripping Dream's hand tight again to feel Dream gripping back.

"No one won."

In pure shock, George nearly lets go of Dream's hand if not for Dream still hanging on. There's an unsettled murmuring in the crowd, and amongst Tubbo and Ranboo, while the bands stood in a stunned silence.

Schlatt, swiveling around, gives them a classic shit-eating grin as he says, "because you *both* won."

In record time, the entire world erupts into beautiful chaos.

The lights seem brighter and the crowd seems louder, but the only word that George's mind hung onto was *won*. He *won*. They both did.

He didn't need to listen to how that worked, because frankly, he didn't care. Instead, he swiveled to look at Dream, who he could tell was just as shocked as he was. In an instant, they were throwing themselves at each other, hugging tight, grabbing whatever they could of each other and just embracing in pure relief. George swore he felt his feet temporarily leave the ground as they hugged and hugged, both sweaty and exhausted and so overcome with stress they deserved to sleep for a

whole day, but there was such an overwhelming sense of relief and buzzing adrenaline that neither were immediately bashful by this hug.

George was going to motherfucking San Diego.

And so was Dream.

“We did it,” Quackity shouts in glory. “Fuck yeah, we did it!”

“Fuck yeah, we did it!” Wilbur shouts back, and despite Bad’s weak protests against the poor language, the entire room was filled with such good energy and bursting happiness that truly no one could so much as frown in the presence of such a moment. This was going to be a wild, wonderful ride, and everyone knew it.

There was something beautiful about how much George and Dream’s worlds had collided.

## Chapter End Notes

I promise the humor will be back next chapter! This is pretty half-assed as I'm very tired tbh but I wanted to get this chapter out :) hope you're all doing great

# Feels Like We Only Go Backwards

## Chapter Notes

Dream lore pog

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

### ***Dream***

The two months following the final, successful competition were filled with anticipation from both parties.

The final showdown between The Dream Team and The Feral Boys had taken place on one of the first Saturdays of January, and the concert in San Diego wasn't until late March. This gave them enough time to come up with a setlist, but also enough time to chill out for the first time in months.

In this time, the groups hardly were distinguishable as two separate links. At first, it had been a rocky transition from groups of four and three to one mass of seven, but after a few weeks of adjusting and practicing as a whole, they were quick to change. Nowadays, coming back to his apartment to find Quackity and Karl on his couch using his Xbox wasn't exactly a rare occurrence as he had two new apartment keys on his keyring now. As close as they all were becoming, Dream still felt this kind of tension, this uncrossable barrier separating him and George. Maybe they were close as a *whole*, but individually? He wasn't so sure.

He felt as if he and George were two magnets facing the wrong way attempting to get closer; they *tried* to get close, and they managed to get to that kind-of close stage without fully crossing into the *close* territory.

However, there was some progress: Dream didn't feel like he was intruding on George's life anymore. Instead, he felt like he was part of it.

For the concert, they had the stage for four songs. Given they had seven people, performing all together for all the songs seemed like it would be unsuccessful, so they had settled on separating into smaller groups for the first three songs and uniting together for the last.

"Quackity, for the last time, you can *not* put Patches in your suitcase," Dream says sternly. Protectively, he huddles his arms around Patches, who sat unsuspecting in his lap.

"Why not?" Quackity near-whines. "She would love the sunny weather, wouldn't you Patches?"

Patches gives him a look that suggested otherwise. "Drista is coming over to take care of her- wait, is that an entire bottle of *Vodka*?"

"That's definitely not legal," George says from across the room, lazily strewn over Quackity's bed with his phone held in one hand, "unless you Americans have some weird laws. I wouldn't be surprised."

Dream snorts, "*you Americans*. You sure love making fun of Americans for someone so obsessed with McDonald's."

"Hey!" George squawks defensively, pointing a finger out at him, "we have those back in the UK

too, mind you.”

“Those chicken nuggets are soggy as hell,” Quackity says in the midst of trying to stuff some unnamed bag into his compact suitcase. And such a sentence, spoken to George of all people, was as good as waging an entertaining war of *do you lack tastebuds, you nitwit?! refuted by eat your nuggies and shut the fuck up.*

As Quackity left his spilling suitcase in the center of the floor to go out to the bathroom to retrieve some things, that left George and Dream alone. Despite hanging out almost every day for the past few months, it was always in a group setting. Aside from sometimes sitting next to each other or having small interactions, they hardly were the only two in a room. At first, it was incredibly awkward being alone with George, especially after the *incident* that George would turn all red when he spoke about. You know, the incident where George thought they had slept together.

Surprisingly enough, this was comfortable. Dream sat on one of Quackity’s beanbag chairs thrown to the corner of his room while George still resided on the bed. The sounds of the rest of the group in the kitchen were muffled by the half-closed door. “Are you all packed?” Dream asks. George spares him a glance from his phone screen.

“Yeah. You?”

“Yup.”

This was the final night before they left for California early the following morning, where they would arrive in the early evening. It came as a shock to no one that Quackity only *started* his packing at 10 PM the night before their 7 AM flight.

Nothing felt real about this situation, even after Schlatt himself had pressed the smooth paper of seven plane tickets in Dream’s outstretched palm, tickets for a ride across the country. Dream couldn’t believe that he had somehow done enough in his life to earn himself an opportunity like this. He had been waiting for this moment, since he had pushed in the piano bench and picked up a pair of drumsticks, or stepped behind the daunting spotlight of the microphone. It was insane to him that, despite the majority of his life spent preparing for the reward to come, he felt as if this opportunity had fallen from the sky and, by some miracle, into his lap.

Dream didn’t sleep even as he laid his head down to sleep in the comfort of his own bed, which he wouldn’t sleep in again for days. His eyes stayed glued open, fixed on the ceiling until the distinct shrieking of his alarm clock rocked him back to earth. He couldn’t tell if he had been dreaming or simply been trapped in his own thoughts.

Despite the overwhelming excitement, there was an overwhelming anxiety that came with it. It began with the usual insecurities, the fear of failure. Then came the smaller difficulties, like whether the traveling would be safe, or if someone got sick. Finally, came the bigger issues. These were the tip of the iceberg.

Dream wore a mask and hood to hide his face, of course, but his initial reasons for this weren’t purely out of self-consciousness. In fact, it was to hide. He had to hide from his parents, his overbearing mother in particular, who was on a quest to find him since the day he had vanished from the household with only a scrawled note left on his unmade bed as a clue.

*I’m going to go be a dreamer now*, it had said. *I hope you understand that I have to do this.*

His mother had always used the word “dreamer” as an insult against him. But clearly, given his nickname, he didn’t see it as such.

But at first, his mother didn't understand. Not in the slightest. She tried to get the police on his tail, but due to being a legal adult and financially independent, the policemen had shook their heads and told her there was nothing they could do about her son's absence. *I'm sorry, ma'am, they had said, your son isn't under your control anymore.*

So, she had to pursue him on her own.

Dream would never forget the permanently bitter expression etched onto her face, and how he saw her within the crowd of his audience over at L'Manburg.

*Come home, Clay, she kept saying. Stop this. Stop hurting me.*

He wanted to tell her that the house he was raised in was never truly his home, but instead, he said, *don't call me Clay. It's not my name anymore.*

And so Dream vanished. Blocked her, wore a mask, and was strictly referred to as Dream. He never heard from her again. Only from Drista and occasionally his father. Sometimes, he would see his mom on the background of Drista's camera when they were FaceTiming, but aside from her distant staring, she didn't interfere. It seemed she had given up.

But even after she had given up, Dream didn't take the mask off. He realized how easy it was to walk around knowing no one could see your vulnerabilities.

This information was relevant as, with much fretting, Dream realized it would be virtually impossible to hide his face from whoever his roommate was in the hotel.

He tried not to think about it as he somehow pulled himself from bed, threw on a hoodie, and met his friends at the airport.

He tried not to think about it as he sat in the cramped airplane seat and kept his hands clasped tightly in his lap.

"You okay?" comes a soft voice from beside him. Dream looks to the side to, surely enough, see a very sleepy George sitting right beside him.

"Yeah," Dream says, but it seemed to be more of a question than an answer. George yawns. Dream didn't even notice his knee bumping up and down a million miles an hour until he heard George's voice again.

"Did you sleep last night?"

Dream gives a little sigh. "Is it obvious that I didn't?"

George shrugs in a way that says *yeah, man, you look like shit*. "You should get some sleep before we get to California," George says, tugging his phone from his bag along with some tangled earbuds, "Bad is pretty determined to make us 'bond as a group.'" He noticeably cringes as he says that, making Dream give a conceding chuckle.

"I have a hard time sleeping on planes," Dream admits. When he was a kid, he used to entertain himself simply by staring out the car window for hours and busying himself with his own overactive thoughts. A similar thing happened on planes. He was just so restless.

"Well, this might help you." George offers an earbud out to Dream, which he graciously takes before sticking the earbud in. At first, some Travis Scott song was playing, but George seemed to pick up that this wasn't good music to fall asleep to as immediately the playlist shifted to some

softer sounding vibes. Even as the plane rattled with movement and the distant noise of the flight attendant sparked through the scratchy speakers, Dream kept his eyes closed and the back of his head leaned against his headrest.

Dream started to really feel himself drifting by the time they were well into the air, and the song “Feels Like We Only Go Backwards” by Tame Impala played in the ear with the headphone in. Despite only having half of his hearing filled with the music, he felt as if he was immersed in it.

*It feels like I only go backwards, baby*

*Every part of me says “go ahead”*

*I got my hopes up, oh no, not again*

*Feels like we only go backwards, darling.*

The distant sounds of the bass, the drums, and the drowned vocals made Dream feel as if he were at the bottom of an ocean of sound, ears plugged with water and eyes closed. He felt as if the sound was picking him up and letting him float.

But the song felt fitting, in a way. Often times with George, he felt like they were only going backwards. That they would finally get somewhere only to go further back than when they had started.

That wasn’t true anymore.

Maybe they were only taking baby steps, maybe they had to push themselves to do so much as share earbuds. But they weren’t going backwards anymore.

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“It’s hotter than the devil’s asscheek out here,” Sapnap whines from the passenger seat of their rented van. It was a tight fit, especially when everyone had at least one bag. Unhelpfully, Karl suggested that George sat in Dream’s lap, and after receiving twin seething glares, he respectfully turned back around and kept his ideas to himself.

“How would you know how hot the devil’s asscheeks are?” Quackity muses from the back seat. Sapnap grins.

“Because I’ve slept with your *mom*-”

“That’s enough!” Bad interrupts. Dream had to agree, despite his own snickering.

He had to admit this was going to be a fun trip. They got to miss a few days of classes, they got a free trip out to California— Dream was excited for the adventures to come.

However, their next adventure was assigning roommates.

The group of seven stared at the three room keys dangling from Karl’s finger for far longer than they had to.

“Only three?” Karl says.

“Schlatt said it was cheaper that way,” Sapnap explains.

“Well,” Quackity adds, “Karl, Sapnap and I can share, obviously.” With that, Quackity gazes over

the keys before plucking one from Karl's hand.

Bad, Wilbur, Dream and George all stare at each other. The math was supposedly simple, four divided by two, yet it seemed that none of them could figure it out.

"I'll room with Bad," Wilbur offers helpfully.

"Awesome!" Bad replies with wholesome enthusiasm.

"I hope you're ready to hear my rendition of the Soviet National Anthem."

"Absolutely *not*."

By process of elimination, Dream and George slowly look to one another.

"Uh," Dream starts. "Wait, does that mean we have to-"

George clears his throat, "*seriously?* This was on purpose, wasn't it?" Karl, Quackity, and Sapnap look back to him with confirming, matching grins. George scowls.

"Whatever," George says with a small sigh, slinging his bag over his shoulder. "It's fine." He turns and looks up at Dream, "you don't snore or anything, right?"

"Not that I'm aware of," Dream replies.

"We should be fine then."

Just as they were about to make their way into their room, Dream noticed how Sapnap paused before entering the hotel room beside theirs, looked to Dream and George with a wry grin, and said, "by the way, guys, there's only one bed."

In unison, George and Dream exploded.

"WHAT?!" They both shout, but with a good deal of cackling, Sapnap disappeared behind his own hotel room door.

"Sapnap!" George squawks, "you little- get back here! We have to trade rooms! You lot are all basically sleeping together as is!"

Dream can't help but snicker at the sight of George all riled up as he twists the keys in the key lock and nudges the hotel room door with his foot. George huffs.

"Surely they're joking," George assures both Dream and himself.

They weren't.

Sure enough, there was one, just one, queen-sized bed with a small note next to it declaring that an extra cot bed would be one hundred dollars.

"I'll sleep on the floor," George offers.

"You're not sleeping on the floor," Dream counters.

"You sleep on the floor, then."

"I don't want to!"



They ended up settling on having a distinct pillow divider as both of them were equally exhausted and unwilling to pay the hundred dollars for an extra bed. Keep in mind, musical genius aside, these were two scrappy college kids.

After practically wrestling each other to death as a race to get to the shower first, the two had settled down. Despite Bad's insistence to "bond" like this was some sixth grade camp for them to hold hands and sing kumbaya, both George and Dream agreed to sleep for the rest of the night.

Dream swiped a hand over the steamed mirror in the bathroom, his palm gathering the condensation to reveal the reflective surface beneath, like a scratch mark in fabric. He looked at the small strip of his face visible, and the long, damp hair that fell over his eyes. He squinted at himself in the mirror.

Could he trust George?

Dream takes a breath, brushes his teeth, gets some clothes on, basically goes through everything possible to stall the act of opening that bathroom door and facing his fears.

Quietly, he clicks open the door. He was relieved to find that the light was turned off. Maybe that would make this easier.

He takes a cautious step closer to the bedroom, where George was waiting in bed just around the corner. The only source of light was George's phone screen, and the moonlight wafting in through the cracks between the curtains.

"George?" Dream murmurs. His voice sounded so timid that he hardly recognized it as his own.

"Yeah?"

"I don't have my mask on," he says simply. He watches as the light of George's phone clicks off. He hears the rustle of George sitting upwards in bed.

"I can look away," George offers. Dream huffs a nervous laugh.

"Oh, that's fine," Dream says. It wasn't. His hands were shaking at his sides. No one had seen his face for a long time, aside from Drista when she visited and George when he was so drunk he couldn't remember it. "You're bound to see it if we're roommates."

Bad had shown his face to the group over a month ago. The reaction was positive. But Dream felt like he was playing chicken with his own insecurities.

"Are you sure?"

No. "Yeah." His voice quavers. His feet feel so heavy as he pads across the carpeting of the hotel room, and finally, around the corner. Surely enough, there was George, wide-eyed and sitting upwards in bed, powered-off phone clutched in his hand as he awaited him in anticipation.

They stare at each other for a long time.

Dream watched George carefully, and looked for the disgust, the gawking, the pointing. George never did such a thing. Instead, he looked at him, really looked at him, and smiled.

"Oh," George whispers.

"Oh?" Dream echoes.

"I always wondered what you looked like," George murmurs, voice laced with sleep deprivation. Dream found himself coming closer, closer, until he was sitting on the bed right beside George. He was still timid and on-edge at the feeling of the air cool against his bare face with George right in front of him. He feels the warmth of a hand on his face, a warmth he jumped at at first; George's thumb traced slowly along Dream's cheek.

Aside from features like tan skin, freckles, and bright green eyes, Dream had one particular feature that stood out from the rest: a scar. Not a small nick to his brow or a faded white line along his jaw. A long, jagged scar.

The scar split between the arch of his brow and crawled down his face, the point of the now-pink line ending just above the line of his lips. It was a somewhat straight line that sliced down the right side of his face.

"How'd you get this?" George asks. But his gaze wasn't judgmental. It was curious. Dream doesn't so much as flinch when he feels George's fingertip graze along the now-smooth skin of his scar. The scar used to stick out like a sore thumb as he had to get stitches in his face. Nowadays, it looked like nothing more than an accessory, but of course Dream blew things out of proportion when it came to himself.

Dream fiddles with the blanket under him. "Car accident," he says simply. It was the truth. He couldn't recall it all exactly if he was asked. He drove, but not in the right state of mind. He wasn't drunk, no, but he might as well have been; he was drunk off of terrible feelings of anxiety and self-loathing and the need to get *out*, so much that he didn't notice when the bright headlights of a car across from him shone too brightly until the light was all he saw-

And then he woke up in a hospital bed with a long scar along his face, bloody and stitched. "Glass," the doctor had told him. "*you're lucky you didn't lose your eye.*"

To Dream's delight, George doesn't pry. Instead, he hums, drops his hand from holding Dream's face, and scoots away from him a little.

"I know it's ugly," Dream says between a forced laugh. It was supposed to be funny, really, but instead it just sounded sad.

George's brows crease as he looks at him. "Don't say that," he says in a soft voice. "Dream, you-well, you're-"

"I'm?" Dream helps.

George bites his lip, breaks their gaze bashfully. "You're beautiful," he whispers.

Dream feels his entire face flare with heat.

Sure, he'd been called handsome, hot, sexy, literally *everything* else.

But never beautiful.

If Dream were a braver man, he'd be doing what his heart told him to do in this moment, where he and George sat staring at each other, blankets strewn haphazardly over the bed, moonlight painting the side of George's face and illuminating his warm eyes. Dream would hold George's face and say *you're the most beautiful thing I've ever seen* and kiss him, kiss him, kiss him— kiss him until George's back was to the bed, kiss him until they fell asleep, kiss him until the warmth of the sun rise washed over them, kiss him until hands pulled on his hair and clutched onto his back, holding on, holding *him*.

“Good night, Dream,” George murmurs. Without further word, George slinked into the blankets, adjusted their pillow barrier, and left Dream staring at his turned back, dumbfounded.

“George?” Dream asks, a few minutes later. George hums. “Thank you.”

He could practically hear George smiling. “Of course,” he says, voice scratchy from sleepiness.

For once, Dream didn’t feel that crawling voice telling him that George was lying to him.

He fell asleep in an instant.

(He was in great denial that he just fantasized kissing George silly, but surely he would return to that train of thought soon enough.)

## Chapter End Notes

I can't get Slumber Party by Ashnikko out of my head

# Roslyn

## Chapter Notes

long chapter :)  
get ready cuz this one's a rollercoaster heehee

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

### *George*

Waking up to a screeching alarm after a few short hours of sleep was a special kind of torture.

Disoriented, George cracked open his eyes as he didn't recognize the phone alarm as his own. His body felt heavy, similarly to when his weighted blanket would bunch up and comfortably crush him. Did Sapnap prank him again and wake up at 4 in the morning for no reason other than to piss him off?

George's eyes popped open once he remembered that he was a coast away from his measly apartment in New York.

Which meant his weighted blanket was still on his bed at home.

Which meant he had no idea what the *fuck* all this weight was.

Once the blariness of just opening his eyes wore off, the visage around George came to life. First, he noticed the pale, LED-less ceiling above his head, and the blank dispositions of the rest of the hotel room.

Then he noticed *it*. Well, more like *who*.

Dream.

Dream hadn't lied about not snoring in his sleep, but he never, *never* said anything about being a sleep-cuddler.

Despite his own phone alarm going off, Dream looked more dead than asleep. The pillow barrier was long gone, tossed off and forgotten to somewhere on the floor; George felt practically crushed, but in some admittedly comfortable kind of way. Dream was half-laying on, half-holding onto him, arms wound tight around George's middle. He felt a chill run up his spine as he felt the heat of Dream's hand brushing on the inch of skin above his waistline, where his shirt had rode up while he was sleeping.

George had the initial thought to shove Dream off of him, scurry across the floor and leap out the window as that seemed easier than facing whatever predicament they had found themselves in. Shockingly, he did no such thing; instead, he watched.

He felt like a creep, really, but there was something remarkable about the fact that less than twenty-four hours ago, he had no clue what Dream looked like, only that he had tan skin and brilliant eyes. But now, he knew everything about his face. It felt almost criminal being allowed to know about the scar across his face, or how his lips turned up when he smiled. He wondered how

he looked when he laughed. But the *real* laugh, not the polite chuckle. George had always wondered that.

And his hair. It was like spun gold. If George didn't know any better, he'd guess that Dream was some son of Apollo as truly, Dream looked like the embodiment of sunlight.

It made George's heart ache remembering last night, so dim and dark, how even through the sparse lighting he could see how Dream's hands shook. He had the unfiltered thoughts to take both of Dream's hands in his own. To tell him his scar was *pretty*, not the ugly mark he probably made it out to be.

George didn't understand himself. He was too scared to.

Instead, George gingerly poked at the sleeping lump that had well overtaken his personal space bubble. "Dream," he says sharply. He felt like he was getting angry with a puppy or something, poking Dream awake like this.

"Mmf," Dream replies intelligibly. Dream didn't lift up his head, or let George go, or even open his eyes. Nope, he couldn't spare George any suffering. Instead, he buried his face in George's stomach, likely mistaking it for a pillow. As if his flushed face and beating heart weren't enough proof of the thoughts whirring in George's brain, he felt his stomach do about a thousand flips at the feeling. It was so domestic, so adorable, and way too much for George's heart to handle. He swore he could feel Dream's lips faintly against the strip of exposed skin Dream's face was pressed against.

Now again, of course George wouldn't make the *logical* decision of coaxing Dream awake, getting out from under him, and excusing himself elsewhere to preserve some dignity.

Of course he didn't do that.

Instead, he tensed, his legs seizing up involuntarily. With this involuntary action came his thigh, smacking Dream right in the side of his face and waking him up brutally fast. George flinches at the pained groan Dream gave off and nearly squirmed at how his blood felt as if it became piping hot in his veins-

"What the fuck?!" Dream moans, promptly pulling his face away from George's middle. "What are you- oh."

They stare at each other, Dream's default phone alarm still blaring, Dream's arms still pinned on either side of George's frame, both delirious and sleep-deprived and looking like deer in headlights.

"Why is your face so red?" Dream mumbles, still rubbing his eyes awake. George practically scrambles away from him, kicking the blankets off the bed and nearly falling to the floor in the process.

"I- I woke up with you all like *this*," he sputters.

"How did you know it was me who started it?!" Dream complains, face clearly heating up as well.

"I don't sleep-cuddle! I don't even awake-cuddle!"

The phone alarm still going off sounded awfully similar to the alarm going off in his mind:

*You're gay. You're gay. You're gay. You're gay.*

(In reality, all the alarm sounded like was *BEEP, BEEP, BEEP, BEEP*. George's mind was really out to confuse the poor guy.)

"Whatever," Dream huffs. George's head was still spinning by the time Dream silenced his phone and excused himself to change in the bathroom.

"Get some clothes on, loser," Dream peers his head out of the bathroom to say, "Bad says we're going on a hike."

"Then hurry up and get out of the bathroom, *loser*," George mimics. Dream makes a face at him before vanishing into the bathroom once again. It was as if they both decided they didn't want to speak of what just happened, because they both knew one thing:

It was nice, waking up in each other's arms.

*Shit.*

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As it turned out, hiking sucked ass.

It was late morning of Saturday, and George would think that the heat wouldn't pick up until the afternoon. Not in San Diego, apparently.

"I think that California is right on top of hell," George complains, feet practically dragging up the dust of the hiking trail. Their performance wasn't until 8 PM, and though they all had the urge to practice all day, as by Bad's suggestion, it would be good for them to do something non-music related.

"You big baby," Dream replies. "Florida is—"

"So much hotter than this, I *know*," George spits back. It was all out of good nature though.

"Dang," Quackity calls from ahead, "who knew all it took was a shared bed to put an end to your sexual tension?"

"Oh no," Sapnap interjects, "the tension is *definitely* still there. It's just, like, they're acting less like an old married couple."

"I hate you all," George mutters bitterly. He and Dream avoided eye contact as the group trudged on. He really didn't see the appeal of this hike, where the trail was marked with light dust that seemed to get everywhere. He felt disgusting, like the dust had sunken into his skin and under his clothing. And that was aside from the sun beating down on his back.

The view was nice, but in George's opinion, it wasn't worth dragging himself up a mountain face for.

Because of his already-sore feet and lack of training for such circumstances, George found himself far behind the rest of the group. Who knew that Quackity, Karl, and Sapnap would lead such a quick pace? As for Wilbur and Bad, George couldn't tell if they were extremely far *ahead* or extremely far *behind* him.

George blows out an exhale slowly as he forces his feet to approach the rocks impeding his path. After looking it over, he deducted that he would have to sort of fit his feet to the rocky surface and scale upwards.

About to go forth on this trek, George steadied his foot to a dent in the dusty rock face, but before he could injure himself or swan dive off the face of a cliff, a hand extended in front of him.

“Here,” a voice said. George’s eyes flickered upward to, surely enough, see Dream. He felt a pang of guilt as the others were a blur in the distance. Dream likely had lagged behind to make sure he didn’t trip to his death or something.

Nonetheless, George clasps Dream’s hand firmly and uses it to pull himself up before he stands levelly on the next portion of the trail.

As George looks up to meet eyes, a thankful smile accompanying it, he was momentarily thrown off guard by the fact that he could *see* Dream’s face. This morning, Dream had made the decision to show his face to the rest of the group as, apparently, after he showed George, he felt far more comfortable with other people too. It warmed George’s heart to see the embracing reaction Dream received with the big hugs Karl gave and the hyping-up the group provided.

“*Are you sure?*” George had said just before they stepped into the hallway, hand fastened around Dream’s sleeve. Dream gave a confident smile.

“*I’m sure.*”

And he was.

“Thanks,” George says a little breathlessly. He became acutely aware of how close together they were, with Dream’s hand still clasped in his, bodies a few inches apart.

“No worries,” Dream replies. Dream had absolutely no reason to look this good when it was a million degrees out in the middle of a hike that was leading them to butt-fuck nowhere. The sweat along his forehead glistened in the sunlight but not in a gross way, somehow, in a I’m-a-hot-fitness-model kind of way that was simply *infuriating*. And how was it that he managed to wear a sleeveless shirt and not look like an idiot in it?

“Sorry for making you wait up on me,” George starts, his free hand scratching the back of his neck hastily. He still hadn’t realized he hadn’t let go of Dream’s hand. He would realize that very soon.

“No worries,” Dream shrugs. “It’s nice to talk to you.”

After Dream says that, George notices how he clears his throat a little, and when George looks downward, surely enough their hands were still entwined. His palms felt clammy with the extra heat of Dream’s hand, but even more so now that his face was heating up at a steady pace.

“Oh, um,” George starts. “I didn’t realize-”

Now Dream was rubbing the back of his neck, “no no, it’s- it’s fine-”

Being the idiot he was, George let go of Dream’s hand suddenly as if the skin had been warm enough to burn him, and with the action, he didn’t realize how close he was to the edge behind him that Dream had helped him over the first place. Inevitably losing his balance, George flapped his arms out, failed, and grimaced as his back leg braced to keep him from falling back. Despite the ledge being only two or three feet tall, it would be a hard fall onto rocks and dust.

Thankfully, George saved himself before he fell backwards.

However, he had another problem.

“Ouch ouch ouch,” George grimaces as he glances downward to see what had happened. In the act of pressing his foot down to keep from tumbling back, he had forced his foot down too quick at an awkward angle and, sadly, successfully twisted his ankle.

He sucks in his breath as he attempts to distribute his weight onto both feet as a cold pain shot up from the joint.

“Are you okay?” Dream asks quickly, eyes blown wide with concern. “Did you twist it?”

George bites his lip. “I... yeah, I think so.” There was no point in denying it. It was painfully obvious.

“Shit,” Dream mutters. He runs both hands through his hair. “Shit, shit, shit. Okay. Um. I’ll carry you.”

“What?!” Now George’s eyes go wide. “No, no no. I’m not making you do that. I’ll just- I’ll be fine.”

Dream crosses his arms stubbornly. “No way. We have a show tonight— it would suck if you couldn’t stand for it, don’t you think?”

George is silent for a while, staring down at his own ankle, before he sighs in a way that was giving in. Victoriously, Dream grins, squats down in front of George, and peeks over his shoulder. “Well? Hop on.”

At first hesitant, George hobbles forward before looping his legs through Dream’s awaiting arms, presses his front to his back, and places his hands on either of his shoulders. He scoffs. “There’s no way you can-”

Before George could finish his proclamation of doubt, Dream hoisted George upwards quickly enough to make George’s arms tighter around him and hold on tight. Despite the soft grunt at the weight, Dream seemed completely fine carrying him on his back.

“What the-”

Dream snickers. “You’re really light.”

George makes a face at him, even if he couldn’t see it, but instead of retaliating, he stayed quiet as he didn’t want to pester him further. Dream was already caring him on his back.

Eventually, the awkward silence wore off as the two called out to the trio in front of them to turn around as Dream, understandably so, was not willing to carry George *up* a mountain. They fell into comfortable conversation as George’s once-stiff arms strictly on Dream’s shoulders looped around his neck, his cheek pressed to Dream’s coconut-shampoo-smelling hair. They talked about everything and nothing, not pausing even as Dream would stop and hoist George up when he would begin to slip.

Despite a skittishness akin to a cat, George didn’t find himself flinching in the slightest even when Dream would give his thigh a squeeze from where he held it, or give his knee a pat.

“I’ve always wanted to go to Paris,” George drawls, feeling the bounce of Dream’s steps as they walked further down the mountain. He felt his legs bob with each movement. “I studied French in primary and secondary school so when I visited, I could hold conversation somewhat.”

“Wow,” Dream says. “That’s honestly really cool. What’s so interesting about it to you?”



George shrugs. “The atmosphere of it, I guess,” he says. He imagined how his young self, no older than four or five, had his eyes glued to the photos of Paris at night; the trademark Eiffel Tower dazzling like a star magnet in the night, the fashionable buildings of the city illuminating the streets with soft yellow light.

Dream hums. “Chopin went to Paris,” he says randomly.

“That’s the classical composer, right?”

“The *best* classical composer, you mean,” Dream says playfully. He gives off a polite laugh, and George smiles. Dream said little to nothing about his classical routes of music, likely because he had grown to despise it as a kid, so when he said anything about old composers, George was immediately intrigued.

“Oho, I didn’t know.”

“He went to Paris for a bit, performed there. I dunno. That just reminded me of him.” The dust kicks up with Dream’s feet as they walk along. There was little to no greenery around the trail, mostly dried-out grass and ugly weeds. No shade, no pavement. Only dust and dead plants. “He was one of the only composers that composed exclusively for piano, you know. Isn’t that interesting?”

“It is.”

“He was a prodigy, really. Composing stuff at seven years old. That’s *insane*. As much as I love rock music, some classical music is truly art. Though, the romantic era is definitely the best. That way, the pianist can decide how the piece is played instead of sort of copying someone else’s work and trying to perfect *exactly* how it was intended. With romantic music, the pianist can sort of- it’s like that saying, how’s it go? Beauty is the beholder...”

“Beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” George offers.

“Yeah, yeah, that.”

It was so interesting hearing Dream become so excited about something most would find mundane. In all honesty, George hadn’t listened to any classical music, really, but when Dream talked about it, it was suddenly the most interesting thing in the world.

“Dream?” George asks. They were nearing the end of the trail.

“Yeah?”

“Will you...” He lifts his cheek from Dream’s hair and instead presses his chin there. “Will you play some Chopin for me, sometime?”

After a brief silence, he could hear the smile in Dream’s voice as he said, “yeah. Yeah, I will.”

George felt himself smiling, too.

From how much passion Dream poured into his voice when he spoke about this composer, George could already tell he was an amazing pianist.

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“For the last time, George,” Quackity assured his leader, “we *know* the songs. *You* know the songs.”

George takes a breath. He felt like just a second ago, it had been 7:30 PM, a half hour before

performance. And now, suddenly, it was 7:55.

Thankfully, his twisted ankle wasn't a bad injury at all. He had a slight limp to his step, but after wrapping it up with some athletic tape, or *padded strappings* as George knew from the UK, and some Advil, he felt as good as new. It was all thanks to Dream's willingness to carry him down a mountain, however, that his twisted ankle didn't get any worse.

"I know, I know," George frets, adjusting himself from where he was sitting on a stool alongside the thick velvet curtain separating him from his childhood dreams. "It's just... nerve-racking, that's all."

Karl's eyes soften with sympathy. They all had been practicing daily for two months. At this point, all of them could play their setlist with their eyes closed, backwards and forwards. They all knew that, but still, the nerves were incurable.

"I still can't believe we're actually here," Bad adds, hands fiddling with his black shirt. "We went from an audience of one hundred to an audience of thousands basically overnight. We're so lucky to have this opportunity, don't you think?"

"But we worked hard for it," Dream assures them all. George felt an affirming hand on his shoulder that he already knew to be a particular blonde's. There was something so comforting about Dream's presence to the point where his very appearance made the band relax a little.

"We did," George repeats. He tries to take a breath, but through his own nervousness, he could see the rest of the group reflecting his anxieties. Everything about this backstage was more fancy than their near run-down bar they called home to their weekly gigs; there wasn't the threat of instruments getting stolen, the door didn't have to be nearly kicked down to open, the curtains weren't paper-thin and the stage wasn't so tiny. In fact, George figured he could run laps on the stage as a workout.

But within this sheer intimidation, the feeling that George was way in above his head, came an unmatched excitement. He wondered what the crowd would look like, so far away that past rows and rows their faces would blend together into one undistinguishable mass. It was both exciting and terrifying to imagine.

Their silence was broken with the click of the stage lights turning off and the distinct *pop* of confetti that was their cue to emerge from behind the stage and front-and-center. George's stomach feels tight, his heart feels like it was beating unbelievably fast.

"That's our cue," Dream says breezily, and if he were wearing his usual mask and hood, George would figure he wasn't scared, but his eyes gave it away. As they had the stage for four songs before the main event came on, they decided to split it up by group; The Dream Team had the stage first, then The Feral Boys, then a sort of fusion of a few players from each. The finale, the fourth song, harnessed every single member.

Before Dream could vanish to the other world behind the dark curtain, George gripped Dream's wrist to stop him.

"Hey," he says, voice barely audible over the crowd's excited screams. George was realizing how much louder this audience was than the one back at home. "Are you sure you don't want your mask?"

Dream searches his eyes for a moment before he smiles with an attractive confidence. "I'm sure, George."

George reciprocates the smile. “What’s that American phrase you taught me? Go get ‘em tiger?”

Dream’s smile turns into an amused grin. “Ha, sounds funny when you say it.”

He shakes his head, “just go, idiot.”

And he did.

Dream vanished behind the dark curtain into another world George felt he had never truly entered before. With the presence of the opening act, the audience cheered. George peeled the curtain back just enough that he and his group could peek through and watch as confetti fluttered down from above like snowflakes onto the blob of audience. The people, counted in thousands, seemed like millions. Millions of people, plentiful as grains of sand, each with their own stories. It blew George’s mind to see them all. In the small moment before any music played, he tried to look over every single face, and memorize how it looked to see this audience for the first time.

Then came the first strum of the guitar, and with the music, the blank beings came to life.

The first song of their set was “Left Hand Free” by alt-J. Because of the high-energy drums, bass, guitar and vocals, the audience lit up in an instant with the excitement the band was feeding them.

George tilted his head enough to see Wilbur, delivering amazing vocals as always and simultaneously strumming his hollow-body electric guitar, alongside Bad, hood-free, who was plucking away at his bass. Then was Dream, open to the world, practically glowing with ability as his drumsticks seamlessly attacked the drum set. He was dressed in his usual black attire with chains layered onto it, blonde locks falling in his face each time he leaned forward to hit the crash cymbal.

Towards the end, once the climax was reached and the original calm motif of the song was revisited as a conclusion of the song, the crowd’s cheering was deafening.

It was as if the crowd from back home had been copied and pasted over and over again. George’s legs felt numb as he took the place of the other musicians on the stage, picking up his pre-set-up guitar and high-fiving anyone he passed on the way. Timidly, George looked up from where he stood with his guitar strapped around his shoulders, hanging loosely as he blankly looked to the crowd waiting for *him* to play.

He could recount the many times *he* had been the one in the concert audience, waiting for whatever big band to play, staring up at the rookie opening acts.

George felt himself smile as he listened to Quackity announce their song. It was incredible how loud the microphone was, in order to reach the entire stadium of people. Usually, the microphone was hushed in order to not deafen the few people in the enclosed bar.

As George looked to the audience, he felt as if he had conquered the next level of his dream. He felt as if when he looked at the crowd, he was looking himself in the face.

With a small grin, he took a breath and realized now there was no reason to be so nervous. This was his domain after all.

He relished in the feeling of his pick scraping against the metal strings of his guitar, his most prized possession since his teen years, and shared his talent with what felt like the whole world.

Quackity’s raw vocals shook the entire stadium as he accompanied with a few chords to back George’s hard strumming. He felt his body rock forward as he urged his fingers to climb higher and

higher on the fretboard until he captured the sweet, pure sounds of perfect chords.

The song was “Yer Killin Me” by Remo Drive, a mostly high-noise song aside from the few quiet interludes to add more contrast to the overall loud energy of the piece.

Somehow, even as Quackity finished, the remnants of his voice ringing on the microphone went unnoticed as the roar following the finish of their song swallowed up any excess noise.

George feels shell shocked, even as he sets down his guitar and steps up to the microphone, an act that usually instilled an irrational uncertainty in him. Even as he felt Dream’s presence beside him, and then Wilbur, and eventually Quackity, George’s eyes never left the audience before him.

The four lined up towards the front of the stage, Wilbur, George, and Dream all with microphones.

In juxtaposition to the two previous pieces performed, both loud and very rock, this piece included two guitars and three vocalists, George being the feature. After much coaxing and prodding, George convinced Dream to sing beside him and Wilbur on stage. Wilbur played an acoustic guitar for this song while Quackity played electric.

Immediately, the audience responded to the soft chords of the acoustic guitar, and as Wilbur played the intro, Quackity leaned forward into George’s mic and said, “let’s see those phone flashlights!”

It was easily the most beautiful thing George had ever seen.

There was something about being in the crowd of people holding up a phone flashlights, and being on top of it. It was as if he had learned to fly and grazed his feet upon the sea of clouds below, as if he had floated into space and was immersed in stars.

The sun was far past the horizon, making everything dark as the only lights on the stage were the basic lighting, making the focus on the thousands of held-up phones.

George felt his own eyes gloss over at the beauty for a moment, staring at the sea of people holding up their phones for him. For them.

Without much hesitation, he instinctively reached a hand to his side and clutched whose hand he knew to be Dream’s. He knew that touch was Dream’s love language for sure, so when he felt the gentle squeeze to his palm in return, he smiled against the microphone before he softly sang.

*“Up your turret.”*

The range was higher than what he was used to, but with enough practice and pointers from the vocalists, George managed to make his voice breeze over the notes in a way that made him visualize a paint brush delicately painting strokes of paint for the audience before him.

*“Aren’t we just terrified?”* He feels Dream squeeze his hand again. He must feel it shaking.

*“Shale, screen your worry*

*From what you won’t ever find.”*

At the following verse, Dream leaned forward and joined him with the backing vocals, harmonizing and ethereal and beautiful, like a choir of angels.

Once Wilbur joined in at the verse, the audience never faltered with their phone flashlights, held high above their heads and swaying with the slow tempo of the music. Even as the song drew to a

close, George swore he could see a few people in the front row wiping tears. It was an incredible idea that his music moved people to tears.

As the crowd applauded, George didn't let go of Dream's hand. It felt right standing like this, hands clasped as one, staring out to a crowd screaming their names. Despite how loud the atmosphere was, George and Dream looked to each other with such softness that the world felt very quiet.

The final song was very upbeat. "For Once In My Life" by Stevie Wonder. As everyone was featured, everyone had their own roles. George was still on guitar, Wilbur on guitar as well and Quackity on vocals. Karl took on the synth lead, Sapnap stayed on drums and Bad on bass guitar. But Dream? He took the piano.

George had to fight for his attention to remain on his own instrument as truly, Dream's capabilities on the piano were remarkable. It was hard to believe that he had such a craft for classical piano as he was amazing at jazz licks on the keys, able to swipe his hands from flats to white keys as if he had swiped the blues from decades ago.

As George grew up with this Stevie Wonder vinyl, he felt nostalgic as he attacked what would've been a harmonica solo on the upper frets of his electric guitar.

And when the final strum of the song was played, the final pitch released, George felt as if he had woken up from a dream at the sound of the thunderous applause.

People he didn't know or even recognize cheering their names, standing up and jumping up and down, screaming with excitement.

George felt both relieved and depressed that it was over. He did feel like he woke up, but from a wonderful dream. He wasn't even sure if it was all real as they all shouted their thanks into the microphone, picked up their instruments from the stage, and were bathed in darkness once the lights clicked off. For the audience, the concert was only just beginning. For them, their job was done.

George still feels like his head was in the clouds even as he disappeared behind the black velvet curtain, hands clapping on his back, hugs thrown over him, distant cheers fading to his periphery. Nothing felt real, but his mind was stuck in an utter state of euphoria.

But then came the harsh slap of reality.

It was as if the step down from the stage onto the ground once again was the returning from heaven to the mundane reality that was Earth.

As George walked off stage to the backroom to get himself some water, breaking off from the rest of the group, he found someone already waiting there for him.

"George," she blurts, as if she had been holding her breath.

George stares at her for a good, long while.

He simply couldn't believe it.

His *mom*.

She shared his eyes, his dark hair, his pale skin, his thin lips.

But they were polar opposites in views of the world. She made that much clear.

“Mom?” George asks, a pained whisper. His bandmates’ voices were nothing but muffled laughter. He was painfully aware of how alone he was in this moment. “You... you came to see me?”

She nods slowly. George bites his lip. His mother hadn’t seen a music show of his aside from when he was an early teenager. She never came to his college band over in the UK, and certainly not when he transferred over to America.

“I thought it was time to see what you could really do,” she says, grinning brightly. The smile didn’t reach her eyes. George gulps. “After all these years.” Her smile turned thin-lipped, like a straight line with upwards tips at the ends.

“I’m really glad,” George said. “That you came.” The proper thing to do now would be to rush forward and hug her, the mother he had been avoiding for so long. The same mother who had to search for her son over social media and local headlines just to get a hold of him. The guilt weighed heavy and ugly in his stomach. They didn’t hug. They never were like that.

“We miss you back at home, you know,” she says timidly. George fiddles with the strap of his guitar. “It’s been over a year since you were over.”

George’s eyes look to the ground. “Yeah, I guess so.” He looks back up at her. “How did you find me?”

She shrugs. “Your sister brought it up over dinner.” Amidst the bad feeling at the pit of his stomach, George felt a happiness towards his little sister who believed in him from day one. Even when the light of his grandmother faded from his life, she remained bright and unyielding. “I thought I should fly out and see it for myself. Your sister was heartbroken, though, but she had exams she had to study for.” George knew that. She wished him luck over the phone a few hours before. She had stayed up so she could watch the livestream of the performance.

“And Dad?” George asks. He already knew the answer, which was:

“Work,” his mom says. Her smile looked even more strained. “Will you come home though, George?”

“Um,” George starts. Should he lie, or should he tell the truth? His knuckles turn white around the grip of his strap. “Is it going to be like last time?”

(For context, “last time” included lots of shouting and deprecating and “you’re wasting your life, George!” and even more “you’re wasting our *money*, George!”)

His mother scoffs. “Can you *blame* me?” She had a glistening in her eye that showed that she thought she was right. George scoffs back.

“Actually, I can,” he admits. Before she retaliates, he speaks first, “but seriously, I don’t care about all of that as long as you’re supportive of me now.”

She pauses. Her smile faded a little. “Wait,” she starts. “You mean that... this isn’t *over*?”

George’s brows furrow. “I’m not sure I understand,” he says slowly.

“Well,” she says, a nervous laugh tumbling from her lips, “I figured that because you got your little show out of the way you would be...” She motions the rest of her sentence with her hands.

“Done?” George finishes for her.

“Yeah,” she echoes, “done.”

Oh, so *that* was what this was about. She thought that George got all of the “useless” musicianship out of his veins and was ready to return to the “real world” when in reality, *her* world was no place for him. “You’re wrong,” George says simply. “And if... if you think I’m done, you’re *really* wrong. This is only the beginning you know.” His eyes light up when he thinks of the crowd, how much of a mass of people were looking at him and his group that worked tirelessly. Work that finally paid off.

“George,” she said, tone accusatory. George recognized that tone from when he was a four-year-old and dropped a glass vase on the kitchen floor. That time, he messed up. This time, he hadn’t. “Come on, love. You need to *wake up*.”

“Wake up?” George spits back. “Wake *up*? Mum, do you even-” He runs a hand through his hair. It wasn’t like him to lose his temper like that. “Do you even understand what you’re saying to me?”

“Perfectly,” she retaliates. “It *hurts* to see you like this all- all- *obsessed* with this thing that won’t get you anywhere!” She throws her hands up, “don’t you see? Honey, I’ve *been* in the real world and it’s not going to respond kindly to a- a- a *kid* like you!”

“I’m not a kid!” George shouts. His own voice was loud enough to instill a shocked silence into his mother. “I’m... I’m not a kid,” he whispers. He sure felt like one. Suddenly, despite taking a huge step in his musicianship, he felt he was at square one all over again, fighting, feeling trapped, feeling useless.

His mother sighs, and holds out a hand. “Well, hand it over.” Her tone was flat and final.

“Hand *what* over?” George replies.

“The guitar.”

His blood runs cold.

“My- my what?”

“Your guitar, love.” His mom tilts her hand. “Give it here.”

“No, you- you can’t-”

“George,” she starts. “I’m the one who paid for it when you were fifteen, remember?”

“Grandma paid for this,” George whispers. “She- she’s the one who got this for me.”

“No,” his mom murmurs. “She picked it out. I swiped my credit card.”

George’s grip tightens on the guitar.

He was trapped.

He was alone.

He feels his chest constricting. There was nowhere to go. Nowhere to hide. What was he meant to do? What was he meant to say? He stared at her hand. He had no escape.

He was alone.

Until he wasn't.

He feels a familiar hand on his shoulder, and in an instant, he whirls his head around before immediately slackening with utter relief. "Dream?" George says, voice drawn out and exhausted.

"Hey," he murmurs, eyes filled with concern as he looks from George to George's mother.

"Who are you?" She asks with an underlying venom George could easily recognize.

"I'm the drummer," Dream says breezily, arms crossing. George noticed how Dream took a small step in front of him, as if serving as a shield from his mother. "And the pianist. I'm flexible like that." Her lips press together. "Do you play anything?" Dream asks, and if George didn't think he were about to throw up in nervousness, he'd laugh at the lilt to his voice.

His mother looked scandalized. "Why- well- no. I'm an attorney."

Dream shrugs, "attorneys can be musicians too. You're George's mom, right?"

"Yes," she says firmly. "George and I were just talking--"

"Oh, I know," Dream interjects. "Trust me, I *know*." She looks distraught,

"What does that mean?"

Dream shrugs again, "look, I know how you feel. Well, not really, but my parents know how you feel."

She frowns at him, "and how are they doing?"

"Wouldn't know," Dream says, clicking his tongue, "blocked 'em."

If she looked scandalized before, she looked horrified now. "You- you blocked your own parents?"

"Yup," Dream says, popping the 'p', "trust me, I didn't *want* to. But it's pure self defense if you're asking me."

George watches as his mom looks from him and Dream back to him. "Wh- Well, that's good for you. Now George, you know what you have to do--"

"Does he?" Dream interjects yet again. Now she looked *pissed*. "You bought the guitar, yes?"

"Yes," she replies.

"And how old is George?"

"Twenty-three."

"That's right. Well past a teenager." Dream rocks on his heels. George admires his calm nature.

"And you're right, by right of the federal law this is your possession. Now, can you show me a receipt?" She sputters, so he continues, "no? So what, you gonna call the police? Even if you did, do you *really* think they're gonna waste their time on some tiger mom trying to take her hot- ehem, uh- talented son's guitar from him when, technically, he could also claim ownership of it? Word against word, if you will?"



She presses her lips together. Dream tilts his head. “Yeah, that’s what I thought. Now, if you’re done threatening my friend here, you should probably go. The backstage is for performers and *supporters* only, you know.”

Outplayed, George watches as his own mother gathers her bag and what’s left of her dignity. George had never, ever seen anyone put her in her place like that before. Not since his grandmother. In awe, he watches Dream give her a patronizing little wave before she muttered “this isn’t over” as she was promptly shown to the door.

Even as she’s gone, George is left with the weight she left behind.

George doesn’t see Dream turn around, look him in the eyes and ask if he’s okay. He doesn’t hear Dream’s gentle voice, his even gentler eyes, the hands on his shoulders. All he can see is how bright the lights are, how loud the audience was- it was all so, so loud-

“George!” The louder voice brings him back to life and all of a sudden, George was looking Dream right in the eyes. “Hey, you okay?”

George glances up at him. Dream, the guy he used to curse under his breath. Dream, who was so talented beyond belief, yet none of it went up to his head. Dream, who George had begun to have such a need for that it scared him.

It was so easy to push people away rather than to reach for them.

George opens his mouth to say *yeah, I’m fine, thanks*. But it never comes. He opens his mouth, closes it, and stares at his feet. His hands clutch at his guitar strap so tightly until it physically hurts, as if he was still scared someone would rip it away from him. George wonders why the world looked so blurry as he stared at the ground. His shoe was untied. Why was the world so blurry?

He didn’t realize he was crying until he felt Dream’s hand on his cheek to wipe away a tear, but once he realized it, his hands broke down in shaking, his chest constricting and tightening and begging him to sob.

“George,” Dream says, with such tenderness George sniffled. “I’m proud of you,” he murmurs. From where his hand was on George’s cheek, he felt a thumb brush a tear from his lash line. “I’m proud of you,” he whispers again.

Frankly, George bursts into tears.

His hair fell in his face, his hands shook and shook and he thought he might suffocate with how hard he cried, and cried. But Dream knew what to do. He reached forward and wrapped him up in his arms as if by instinct, and together, they rocked back and forth on their feet. George usually was so good on having a grip on his emotions, but right now, all he could do was cry and grip onto Dream as if his life depended on it.

“It’s okay, it’s okay,” Dream murmured, hands brushing up and down his back. He let out a sob, trying to say something like *I’m sorry*, but Dream hushed him. If Dream weren’t here to hold him, George figured he would fall apart.

In the midst of his sobbing, his body shaking and exhausted, he felt Dream grip him tighter with each whimper and cry. He didn’t even have the energy to feel bad for putting so much on Dream, for forcing him to be his saving grace time and time again. All he could do was cry.

And he did. For a long time, he figured, but Dream was patient. He kept rubbing his back, assuring

him they were safe, rocking with him, maybe even crying with him but he couldn't tell. George felt like a shell of a being by the time he finally drained every tear his body was capable of making. His head ached, his heart even more so, and he could physically feel how puffy his eyes must be. He didn't have to say a word for Dream to take his hand, lead him from the back room, and tell the others they would be heading back to the hotel early.

With one glance at the state George was in, no one questioned it, yet silently, Karl walked over to George, hugged him tight, and said a soft "we love you, George."

As they caught a cab and rode back to their hotel, George realized something.

Maybe his mom wasn't his family anymore.

But these people- they were his family.

## Chapter End Notes

while I was writing that ending chapter I had "six feet under" by Billie Eilish stuck in my head,, these lyrics specifically:

"Our love is six feet under

I can't help but wonder

If our grave was watered by the rain

Would roses bloom?

Could roses bloom

Again?"

anyways I hope y'all are still alive after that chapter lmao

# Good Old-Fashioned Lover Boy

## Chapter Notes

oooooh love  
oooooh lover boyyyyy

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

### *Dream*

The rest of the night felt like a whirlwind of worry.

Part of Dream was so angry with George's mother for snatching away this special night from them. Even while Dream assured the rest of the group that they should go out without them, that George would only feel worse if they stayed in, he could see the concern in their eyes. He wished he could assure them that George was completely fine, but they all knew it would only be a lie.

George seemed to be the rock for everyone. He was strong, compassionate— his presence was like a deep-rooted tree with a comfort that wouldn't blow away with any gust of wind. So when he crumbled, it felt like a foundation was broken. Everyone was on edge.

"Ugh," George had groaned once they managed to make it through the door and into their hotel room. "I hate crying." Dream looks over to see George absently rubbing at his eyes as if to scrub away any proof of emotion. His gaze softens.

"I think it's better than keeping it in," he assures him, turning his back to George to strip his shirt for a looser one to sleep in. He hears the bed creak with George's weight. "Aren't you gonna change out of your clothes?" He whirls around to see George, sure enough, still dressed in the outfit Karl helped design for him with jeans and chain necklaces.

George shrugs. He looked so tired that it made something in Dream's heart squeeze. His lashes fluttered, surrounded around red-rimmed eyes and faint streaks where tears had fallen. A single strip of moonlight escaped the window and stretched across George's jean-covered legs.

"Cooooome on," Dream sing-songs, taking both of George's wrists in his hands and giving him a playful tug, "get changed, then you can go to sleep."

After much persuading and tugging, George managed a small smile directed towards Dream before he trudged out to the bathroom and came back in proper sleep attire. Though, by the time he did emerge from the bathroom, Dream was already tucked in bed on his respective side.

It was a scene that Dream's imagination seemed to run away with; as if this were an apartment and not a hotel room they were forced to share. He sighs a little as he feels the bed dip with George's weight.

"Dream," George says, voice timid. Somehow, everything felt so much more intimate now that it was just them, with no lights on, sharing a bed. Dream could feel George's body heat next to him. "I'm- sorry."

Dream scoffs, but not unkindly. "Oh come on, George. Remember what I said? You don't have to

keep apologizing whenever I help you out. This time I wasn't even helping you out." He props himself up with an elbow to see over the pillow barrier and into George's eyes, "I was just being a good friend."

George tries to hold his gaze, but fails. "Well, I know that. But... what did I ever do to deserve this?"

His gaze softens. He knew the feeling well, being undeserving of the simplest things. "Exist," he murmurs. "You existed. That's what made you 'deserve' the life you have." He pauses, "you only deserve the good parts, though. Not the tiger mom parts." Dream relishes in the sight of how George's eyes crinkle cutely around the edges with his smile as he gives a small, tired laugh.

They lay in a comfortable silence, both staring up at the ceiling laying flat on their backs. He knew George wasn't asleep as his breaths weren't slowed and deep. Instead, they stared at the same ceiling from opposite sides of the bed.

Dream had had enough of this.

In one action, he takes the pillow divider and shoves it off the bed before turning his head to look over at George. Even through the darkness, he could tell that George's eyes were wide and confused at the act, but in a silent motion, Dream opens his arms and pats the bed next to him.

He waited for the signals, the shake of George's head, the widened eyes signaling discomfort. The signals never came. Instead, he listened to the silky sound of George slipping across the bedsheets, scooting closer and closer until they couldn't be much closer. Silently, he tucked himself close to Dream, face buried in his neck and arms tight around his middle. Momentarily shellshocked, Dream's hands hovered as he had no idea what to do.

But then, his entire body reflected the warm smile coming over his face, and instinctively, he wrapped both arms around his shoulders. Despite being the only (conscious) time doing this, everything about the scenario felt so nice, so *right*.

"You're cuddly, huh?" Dream teases. Mindlessly, a hand cards through George's hair. From where his face was nuzzled into his neck, George huffs. The breath on his skin almost made Dream shiver.

"Shut up," George says, but it was muffled, drawn out and raspy. He clearly was close to sleep.

"I just think it's funny that you're been an undercover cuddler this whole time," Dream goes on, really milking this joke.

George hums, clearly having no plausible retaliation as he was quite literally clinging on to Dream. "I'll tickle you," he threatens.

"Will you now?" Dream says back, trying to hide the playful fear behind his voice. He gives George's side a sharp prod that made the poor guy yelp. In the midst of his own soft laughter, he feels George shift next to him, but before he could realize what was happening, it was too late. "Wh-"

Ruthlessly, George attacked his sides with tickling that, despite his attempts to purse his lips and keep his own unfiltered laughter at bay, the dam broke, and he just *burst* into wild cackling.

"George!" Dream squeezes out of his lungs that were now contracting with his trademark wheezing laughter, "st-stop oh my *God!*" He practically chokes with how hard he laughed, swiping at George lazily who had a mischievous, adorable— *adorable?*— grin on his face.

Eventually, George showed him mercy once Dream was wheezing so painfully that between fits of laughter he tried to get out that he couldn't even *breathe*, with which George ceased the tickle torture.

"You," Dream pants, propped up on his elbows, "are *evil*." George giggles. *Giggles*. What was with him tonight? Why was he so- well, cute?

"I am, aren't I?"

"Well, don't look so *proud* of yourself!"

George snickers and settles down into a laying position, yet instead of laying on Dream as he had before, he laid beside him. Dream felt his heart falter a little. Great, now he had to find some excuse to cuddle George again. Maybe he could lay here without cuddling him? No, he decided, that was nice and he wanted to enjoy it while he could. So, taking a small exhale, he tugs George into his arms loosely, inviting George closer if that was what he wanted. Dream waited, muscles tense, for George to protest. To show any signs of discomfort. He never did.

"Who's the cuddly one now?" is what George says as he invites himself to scoot closer, closer until Dream could feel his breath on the bare skin of his neck.

"Still you," Dream says back in a drowsy voice. He heard a soft but fond "good night, idiot" before he truly drifted asleep.

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While the few hours of sleep he got were deep and undisturbed, they weren't enough for Dream's eyes to feel fully open.

As he did open his eyes to a dark room, vision foggy and barely functioning, he noticed George still there and fast asleep. He hadn't moved a muscle as George's cheek was still pressed to his chest, mouth slightly open as he slept soundly. He could tell by the feeling of his own ever-spinning mind that he was far too restless to return to slumber, so he reached for his phone with the arm that George hadn't claimed as a pillow. He can practically feel the fondness radiating off of him, even as this arm was pins and needles with George's weight on it.

He unlocked his phone to see that it was only three in the morning, and not wanting to wake George, Dream was determined to stay put. He sighs. It was going to be a long night.

Or so he thought.

He was likely a half hour into his Twitter feed by the time George stirred until gradually lifting his cheek from Dream's chest, sleepily blinking open his eyes, and rubbing them.

"Sorry," Dream whispers, as if George were still asleep. He couldn't help but be quiet as the atmosphere was so sweet, so fragile that he feared any sharp sound might break it. "Did I wake you?"

George shakes his head slowly. "No," he mumbles. After a few blinks, his eyes seemed just as awake as Dream's.

They spent a few minutes both looking at Dream's phone. George tilted his head up enough to see the screen, yet didn't leave his arms. Dream wondered how, in the course of a day, they had gone from kicking each other off the bed to willingly waking up in a comfortable tangle.

“Wanna go for a drive?” Dream offers randomly. George gives him a look.

“Right now?” George says, making a point to squint at the time displayed on Dream’s phone.  
“3:30?”

Dream shrugs innocently. “Well, I know I’m not going back to sleep tonight.”

---

They ended up taking the rental van they had gotten as a group. Both were dressed lazily, sweats and loose band tees, sneakers pulled on over blank socks.

“I could go for some coffee,” George proclaims from where his socked feet were propped up on the dashboard. Despite Dream’s swatting, he stubbornly kept his legs where they were.

“Yeah, me too,” Dream responds. “I think there was a 24 hour place down the street from the stadium. Let’s go.”

They do go, yet as soon as they step in the empty cafe and thoroughly startle the cashier who wasn’t accustomed to customers at such an hour, George gave Dream’s sleeve a tug to keep him from walking further than the door that announced their presence with a tingling bell.

“Dream,” George said, voice hushed, “I didn’t bring any money.”

Dream waves a hand at him, “nah, don’t worry, I can-” From where his hands dug into his front pockets, they turned up empty. The back pockets were the same. Dream grimaces, and wracks his mind for whether he set his wallet in the cupholder of the van, yet with enough contemplation he realized that he, after all, had left it on the bedside table of the hotel room. He sucks in the air between his teeth. “Shit,” he mutters.

“Well,” George sighs. His voice made it clear that this was where he wanted to give up, a fair choice as they didn’t have any *money* after all. “It’s fine, we can just-”

“No,” Dream interrupts, catching his arm. “Wait. I have an idea.” George raises his brows at him. “Just... trust me, will you?”

The cashier was giving them very funny looks. “You’re not gonna like, seduce her, are you?” In unison, they both look over to the concerned employee who looked to be in her late forties with a name tag that read Sharon. Dream snorts.

“George is into MILFs confirmed?” Dream says, trying to contain his laughter. George smacks him muttering “shut up you *idiot*.”

With much bickering and muted laughter, George eventually follows after Dream and up to the register. Ignoring George’s baffled looks, Dream ordered them both coffees as if he had a ten dollar bill in his back pocket. George looked like he expected Dream to bend over and pull some cash out of his ass at this point. Dream made a note to remember how hilarious his expression was in this moment.

“Well, that will be \$8.50,” Sharon says, crimson acrylic nail tapping the screen in which someone could insert a credit card. Dream, however, had other plans.

“Sweetheart,” Dream says, arm thrown over George showingly, “will you pay?”

George gives him a *look*. “I thought you said you would pay,” he says slowly. *Come on George,*

*get that acting up.*

“You *do* remember what day it is, right?” Dream says, making a point out of gritting his teeth. Poor George looked very, very confused. Mutely, he shakes his head. Pretending to be appalled, Dream throws his arms off of George and scoffs at him pointedly. “You forgot *again*?”

George scratches the back of his head. “Uh,” he says intelligently.

“George,” Dream says, brows raised high. “It’s our *wedding anniversary*. Two years today!”

George’s lips form an ‘o’ as he seemed to be picking up on what Dream was trying to accomplish here.

Meanwhile, Sharon’s eyes bounced between the two as if observing an active tennis match. “Congratulations,” she says, clearly awkward. Her eyes glance around as if to check the store for any customers, any excuse to get out of this situation. There were none.

“It’s wonderful, isn’t it?” Dream says to Sharon. She nods quickly. “*George*?”

“I’m *sorry*, okay?” George says back, folding his arms and clearly trying to fit some emotion into his voice. “It’s just- you *always* make *me* pay and now you’re mad that I forgot about a wedding that happened years ago?”

Sharon gasps. This was free entertainment for her, Dream thought. “*Our* wedding!” Dream practically shrieks. He was trying so hard not to laugh.

“S-so,” Sharon stammers out, “you two have been married for a few years now?”

“Yes,” George says.

“Oh, that’s um, interesting,” Sharon says, brows a little creased.

“What, is it because we’re *gay*?” George says. Sharon’s eyes immediately widen like saucers.

“No! No no no, no! Heavens, no, you two just seem so young to be married, that’s all.” She lets out a nervous laugh. “I’m not some- homophobe.” Dream tuts before Sharon quietly says, “the drinks are still \$8.50, though.”

“Are they, now?” George says, whirling to Dream. “Let me guess. You expect *me* to pay, right *sweetheart*?”

“Don’t call me that!” Dream squawks, “I’m not your sweetheart when you can’t remember the day we fucking got married!” He decided to layer on the awkwardness as he wanted to speed the process of somehow getting these drinks without paying a dime. “Don’t you- don’t you remember how we went in that honeymoon suite and I-” oh God, it was so hard not to laugh, “passionately made *love* to you while I played that old Sinatra record? George, you told me you would *never* forget those songs because they made you think of how I-”

“On the house!” Sharon squeaks, practically slamming the drinks down in front of them. “Please, just- seek marriage counseling, but get *out*.”

Silently, Dream and George took their respective drinks. Dream felt like he might explode holding back his laughter for another second, but as soon as they both slipped into either side of the van, they burst into the loudest laughter Dream had ever had.

“Oh my- holy shit you are *way* too good at that!” George practically sobs as he shrieks with

laughter. “What were you even- pa-passionately made love- oh my *God*-”

Dream wipes his own eyes, “the look on her face! George, did you- did you *see*-”

“I saw!” George exclaims.

The coffee was really good, and definitely worth the theatrics. This would definitely make a good story to tell the others on the plane.

Though pranking poor, unsuspecting barista would be hard to top for this drive, they had a wonderful time aimlessly driving around San Diego. Dream never got over the charm of sitting behind the wheel when the stoplights were bleary in the darkness and the buildings hadn’t woken up yet. He loved seeing how the ocean stretched to the horizon in miles of dark waves, how the palm trees swayed in the night and were illuminated with the moon’s bright waves.

He loved how easy conversation flowed just how songs shifted from Freddie Dredd and Mac DeMarco and Queen on the crackly radio of the rental car.

“I don’t feel like going home,” Dream admits as he pulls the car in park back at the hotel parking lot. Despite both being restless and aching to see more of San Diego via the dark streets, they knew they should at least get another hour of sleep before having to deal with the airport and the plane. “I feel so much more free whenever I travel. Like I can be whoever I want when I’m not in the place I’m supposed to be.”

George had hummed. “Tell me more about that,” he had said, much to Dream’s surprise. Despite the fact they were sitting in a hotel parking lot, empty coffee cups strewn in the cupholders of the back seat, George seemed completely content with listening to Dream’s rants.

So, Dream ranted. He told George about how he felt free when he travelled, how he liked being at home but in a similar way he liked being away from it; he wanted to travel to places he had never been and return home knowing he had seen the whole world and had nothing to wonder about anymore.

“Well,” George had said, “we’ll have to go home, but that doesn’t mean we can’t travel again soon.”

Dream smiled, fondly. Life sounded so simple and sweet when George talked about it. “You’re right. We’ll travel again soon.”

*We*. Dream liked that.

---

After that trip, Dream and George were unexplainably close, but no one said anything.

Irritatingly enough, Dream found that each time he crawled into bed for nights week after the escapades in San Diego, the blankets felt so cold and so empty.

He slept *fine*, but never again like he had when George was there.

It was a horrible revelation, one that couldn’t be undone.

It was horrible in the way that when George and Dream sat side-by-side on the couch, or when George sat in the passenger’s side of Dream’s old Chevy truck because he needed a lift, there was an instinct deep in him that wanted *more*. Where he used to not think twice, he now thought a



million times. He noticed everything someone could possibly notice about the surface of someone else: how bright his eyes were despite their dark color, and how despite his cool, calming nature he gave off the warmest presence.

He wanted more.

Dream didn't mind hiding it from everyone, but the fact that he could no longer hide it from himself complicated matters considerably. Maybe he would toy with the idea of asking George out on any kind of date he wanted— seriously, Dream was desperate, he would do anything— if not for the fact that George was, after all, a straight man.

He said it himself, that morning of the hilarious misunderstanding. He had never slept with a guy, which implied he had never *been* with a guy. That didn't mean he couldn't *ever* be with a guy but Dream had the creeping feeling that the look of horror on George's face at the implication that they had slept together spoke for itself.

Sighing, Dream found himself alone on another Friday night. The Feral Boys and The Dream Team had fused into a single body, really, as nowadays they had more band practices together than not. It was funny how thick the air used to be with his and George's tension over coffee or songs, how it was mostly light-spirited but frequent.

Sometimes, he missed that banter. The playful tension and rivalry.

But then he remembered moments like the coffee shop where they scammed their way into free coffees, or how soft George's hair was as he let him run his hands through it when they (platonically, of course) cuddled that night. It had only been one night, yet Dream couldn't seem to shake the memories from it.

So badly, he wanted to know the title of the song that played when he had driven a very drunk George across the main bridge of their town, how the soft tones of guitar had been enough of a lullaby to lull George to a gentle slumber.

Dream groans and presses the heels of his hands to his closed lids in hope that it would clear his mind.

It didn't.

But, he did receive a text from a particular brunette he couldn't seem to pull his mind from.

**George:**

Wanna meet me on the bridge?

I have something for you

Dream's brows raise in confusion, but a pleasantly surprised smile comes to his lips. Nothing excited him more than spontaneous adventure.

**Dream:**

How did you get there? Lmao it's late

**George:**

...I biked

**Dream:**

Smh it's a good thing you have me as a chauffeur

**George:**

Hahah can't argue with that

**Dream:**

What do you have for me??

**George:**

It's a surprise :)

**Dream:**

You're scaring me

**George:**

I am FREEZING my ass off rn

**Dream:**

Okaaaay okay I'm omw lolll

The drive was short yet familiar. This bit of the bridge, a few strides from the base where there was plenty of (supposedly) legal parking, was perfect for threading your legs through the bars and sitting on the cool pavement of the sidewalk. Thankfully there was little to no foot traffic at this time of night, and even if there was, they managed to squeeze past the pair of college boys sitting on the concrete ground of a typical bridge that, for whatever reason, held a strong sentimental value to both of them.

With his hands firmly in his pockets, Dream walked over to where he saw the familiar figure of George, already sitting in his usual spot with his legs swinging over the river. He noticed how the laces of his blue converse were double-knotted to keep them from falling off, which had actually happened the last time they had come to the bridge; really, George had only lost one of his shoes, and out of spite, he threw the other shoe in with it. They laughed all the way home until George realized he would have to cross the broken glass-covered street in socks. (Dream carried him.)

"Hey," Dream says, slipping into his usual seat beside George. George grins at him.

"Hi," he echoes cheerfully, his eyes gazing over the churning waters far below. "How were classes today?"

"Eh," Dream says honestly, "fine. I'm excited for our show tomorrow, though."

George nods enthusiastically. Understandably, the whole group had been somber in the wake of returning from San Diego. It felt as if the whole year had been dedicated to something that was already over and done with, like the anticipation for a big wave to surf with the cost of none more to follow.

“Sooo,” Dream says nonchalantly. “What’s this thing you have for me?” He nudges George’s side with his elbow. He laughs.

“Close your eyes,” George answers. Dream gives him a look, and George gives him a look back, so he obeys. “Hold out your hands,” George says next. Dream makes sure to provide the most quizzical expression possible with his eyes closed, yet he does so anyway. And after a few moments of rustling, he feels something smooth pressed to his outstretched palms. He brushes a thumb over the surface to find it silky, like the shiny paper of something sophisticated.

“Open,” George says.

And he does.

Immediately, Dream gasps once he looks down to see nothing other than a plane ticket:

To *Paris*.

“I um,” George starts, scratching the back of his head, “ever since I heard about this San Diego concert and the cash we’d make from it, I knew I’d be dedicating the money to a trip to Paris ‘cause, y’know, I’ve always wanted to go but we made way, *way* more than I thought so I was wondering if maybe...” George timidly looks up to him, “...you wanted to come? I know you were saying how much you loved traveling and... I mean, at first I was so determined to go and enjoy it all alone but I’m not sure if that’s what I want anymore.”

Dream promptly presses the plane ticket against his heart and after a few moments of fondly staring at one another, Dream leaned forward and engulfed George in a near rib-crushing embrace as an expression of his thanks.

There was something so soft, so sweet about this, how George had once been determined to make it through life without help and had now realized that maybe he could use some help after all. *Dream’s* help.

“What do you mean *if* I wanted to come?” Dream bursts, a laugh pulled from him, “Hell fucking yeah I wanna go to Paris with you!” He pulls back from the hug, holding George at an arm’s length from himself as if studying him. In the sparse moonlight, he couldn’t see much of his face, but in George’s hand was a matching plane ticket. “I don’t even know how to thank you,” Dream starts, still looking from the plane ticket to George and back to the plane ticket. “This is just- *wow*.” Easily, this was the nicest thing anyone had done for him.

Then Dream feels it. The space between them. How it begged to close, to bring them together.

“George,” Dream starts. Anxiously, he stows the plane ticket in his hoodie pocket and out of reach as he feared his incessant fiddling would tear it. And George, he *looked* at him. His heart pounds a million miles an hour in his chest as they look at each other, staring, daring the other to look away and act as if this wasn’t happening— as if Dream wasn’t sliding his hand across George’s thigh and murmuring *is this okay* and scooting closer and closer once he got his confirmation. Was George thinking what he was?

In that moment, a car passed by, causing a flash of light to illuminate the scene unfolding for a split second. Never would that image leave Dream’s mind: George, eyes blown and wide, lips pressed together in anticipation, brows drawn and cheeks prominent with blush. He looked so, well, pretty. Once the card vanished, they were momentarily blinded until their eyes adjusted again.

“Can I,” Dream starts. He looks down at his lips. God, they were so, so close.

For a moment, George pauses, and Dream feared he had ruined everything. His heart skips and skips in his chest. He suddenly remembered all the reasons why he never said a word about his blossoming feelings for George: they were debilitating. Slowly, they would swallow him whole.

“George,” Dream whispers, drawing just a little closer. George’s eyes were hooded. “Can I kiss you?” he says in one breath.

Slowly but surely, George nods.

It felt like everything he wanted at once. That *more*, that *want*, the itch to touch and hold and *kiss* him was finally fulfilled after what felt like forever.

But the kiss was soft, sweet, as perfect as a first kiss could be. Dream was trying to memorize everything he learned about George in this instant from the feeling of George’s cool hands gently tugging at his hoodie, then his hair. He tried to commit the little breaths George would take between kisses, how the exhales were buried beneath the sounds of lips meeting.

His hands wandered from George’s thigh to his waist, loosely sitting on his sides as if to ensure he wasn’t going to slip away into the depths far below. Dream grazed his teeth on George’s lower lip. He felt the smile against his lips in a way he knew would never get old.

Eventually, as breathing happened to be a necessity, the two pulled away from each other, breaths lost in heavy pants and soft, disbelieving laughter at what they just did.

“Um,” George says, “well, wow.”

Dream laughs, even more so as he feels George’s face hide in the crook of his neck. “Well, wow,” Dream echoes. Despite having caught his breath, he still felt breathless. He smiles to himself. George tended to have that affect on him.

Legs still swinging over the churning river water, the two eventually went from looking at each other and giggling like two teenagers who had snuck out past curfew and moved on to chattering endlessly about all the things they would do in Paris. As George had planned it, it would be a two-week-long trip during their spring break, so no classes would be missed. There would be five days in Paris and four in the beautiful coasts of Normandy. Paris would give a taste for the city life while Normandy, in a small rented house lost in the lush nature of the coast, would give a taste for a quieter life in France.

From the outside, the kiss seemed so sudden, and like a matter that needed to be discussed. In all honesty, they probably should have talked about what it was and what it meant, but for now, the two were happy as they gradually pried themselves from the bridge, George leading his bike to Dream’s car, and hopping in their respective sides.

Despite finally getting over the speed bump of kissing, Dream knew they had a long way to go. But he couldn’t wait to figure it all out with George.

“Thanks for the lift,” George says once Dream pulls up to the curb near his apartment. He unlocks his seatbelt and, about to slip from his seat into the night, Dream grips George’s wrist to stop him.

“Wait,” Dream blurts. George looks back at him. “Kiss me one more time?”

Though he pretended to roll his eyes, George practically crawled over the cupholders separating them and kissed him again, and kissed on his jaw, and kissed on his scar over his eye, and eventually let Dream do the same.

When George pulled back, body still trembling with effort of holding himself over the midsection separating the passenger's side from the driver's, Dream restrained the urge to ask George if he could come inside with him. An instinct told him to ride it out, to relax. George wasn't going anywhere, and neither was he. In fact, they were going away *together*. No need to rush.

"Sleep well," George calls over his shoulder.

"You too," he says, and as he watches George disappear into the elevator with his bike propped against his hip, Dream sighed contently.

He decided that he hadn't *ever* been this happy before.

**Dream:**

You should surprise me more often

**George:**

Omfg shut up

**Dream:**

I literally live in your head rent-free

**George:**

Hypocrite

**Dream:**

You got me there

Wanna go mining with me?

**George:**

Oml you wanna go on a mining date? Dweam

**Dream:**

Come onnnn I wanna use your pick

**George:**

Fine fine I'm coming

Any worries that the precious bond they had would break faded away after most of Dream's night spend on a Minecraft sever with George. He realized that things would change, but not the important things.

heehee <3

also thank you all for the comments they're so so sweet

# Grow As We Go

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

### *George*

The few weeks leading up to the Paris trip were filled with anticipation and insanity.

Collectively, George and Dream decided to keep their fling- whatever it was- on the down-low. It had been an unspoken decision as, despite the clear-as-day mutual desire for one another, their bond was still delicate and growing. Showing this to the world would be similar to taking an old photograph out of water before it was finished processing; there were still many foundations to be built, decisions to be made.

So, in the safety of the shadows of night and of the secluded back room of the stage, they let themselves be free. There was something so exciting and addictive about having this secret, this *thing* that only the two of them knew about.

George found himself alone in his room, content with the cool chill of the spring night that had breezed through the walls and buzzed about the atmosphere. Despite his burning hatred for warm weather, as the temperatures climbed George was reminded of how much closer spring break was becoming, the break where he would find himself wrapped in buildings and architectures of another world he hadn't dared to touch.

While his hands were occupied with his acoustic guitar, his eyes were focused on the strewn-about pages in front of him for the comp sci exam he (probably) should have started preparing for a week or two earlier, but hey, no better time than the present.

The atmosphere of his room was perfect, LED lights illuminating the place with a dim blue and his lamp beside his bed on its lowest setting. He was seated in the center of his messily-made bed, eyes skimming over his inked notes, the pages strewn without order.

By the time George figured he finally was getting somewhere with his studies, he heard a loud clunking sound against his window. Now, usually, given his apartment was three stories from the ground, the only possible sound that could be emitted from the outside of his window would be some kind of bird or insect hitting it. So, when George looked outside to see a whole *figure* standing there, he gasped in momentary fear, his grip tight around his guitar as if ready to utilize it as a weapon, until he realized just who this figure was.

Quickly and quietly, George sets aside the acoustic instrument and walks over to the window and, unlatching and sliding it upwards, he whispers, "how did you get up here?!"

The figure, who was no one another than Dream, wriggled through the open window and promptly hopped onto the safety of George's carpet. "Fire escape," he says simply. On cue, George peers his head out the window and studies the winding, rickety metal that made up the thin staircase of the fire escape.

"You went up that for three levels?" George whisper-shouts, disbelieving. Dream grins at him.

"Yup," he says, to George's dismay, in a not-so-quiet tone. He silences him with a patronizing "*shhh!*" before, inevitably, Sapnap's voice came loud and clear from the other room,

“George? Do you have someone over?”

George cringes and hurries over to where his bedroom door was ajar. “No! No, no one’s over.”

“Are you filming ASMR again?”

George smacks Dream for snickering at that. “Sapnap, there was never a *before*. You’re delusional.” George promptly slammed his door to prevent Sapnap from his quest to torture George with embarrassment and, as soon as the door shut, Dream let himself laugh a little louder.

“ASMR, huh?” Dream teases.

“Shut up,” George says, “but seriously, be quiet. If we don’t want anyone to find out, telling Sapnap would have to be the worst thing to happen. He can’t keep a secret to save his own life.”

Dream rolls his eyes, “okay, okay.”

“What’re you doing here?” George says, smile building on his lips. In his periphery, he saw the notes he had been studying just a moment before Dream literally crawled up the side of the building to get into his room. The man was full of surprises.

Dream shrugs. “Just wanted to see you,” he says nonchalantly. With one swoop, he scoots George’s notes to one side of the bed and makes himself right at home as he had many times before, practically leaping onto George’s mattress.

“Aww,” George mocks, but the true adoration was clear in his tone, “how sweet of you, Dream.”

“I know, that is pretty sweet of me.”

Instead of walking over to where Dream was laying, shoes kicked off and arms propped behind his head, George made his way over to his desk to fish out his textbook where he intended to review a few terms in the glossary. “What are you doing?” Dream near-whines. George shoots him an innocent smile.

“Studying,” he says. “It’s what I was doing before you came. Surely you wouldn’t mind if I continued?”

Dream scrunches his face at him before sitting up with a sigh of defeat. George turned back around as if he didn’t notice how hot and bothered Dream was becoming. It was funny, really.

But at the same time, there was something so comfortable and domestic about this situation: Dream had shown up at his apartment unannounced and spontaneous, yet that was just the way George liked it. Leading a secret relationship/fling/friends-with-benefits kind of thing required improvisation. Thankfully, both were creative in their ways.

“George,” Dream complains. George ignores him. “George,” he says again. He still doesn’t answer, and thankfully from where he had his back turned to Dream, he couldn’t see how he was suppressing laughter behind his hand. “Geoooooooooorge,” he says again, and George figured if they weren’t trying to be quiet, he would’ve exaggerated and shouted that last bit.

Of course he gave in.

He whirls around, raises his brows at him, textbook still in hand. “Can I help you?” he says guiltlessly.



“Yeah, you can actually,” Dream says, brows raising back. “I haven’t kissed you in like, three days,” he starts.

“What, you’ve been counting?” George jokes, but he set his textbook down with a *thump* and hopped onto his bed beside Dream.

“Maybe,” Dream says back.

“Actually, it’s been four,” George mutters. “We’ve just been so busy...”

Dream hums, but in an instant, George had practically rolled onto him and nudged his face closer and closer until they were fully kissing. Despite the costs of having no label on a relationship, they were free of pressures that came with being proclaimed boyfriends- pressures of what they should *do* and how often, pressures of seeing each other constantly and rubbing their relationship into other people’s faces. Pressures of making a clear distinction between friends and lovers. But really, they didn’t have to *do* anything yet if they didn’t want to. So they didn’t.

Instead, they lead a delicate yet promising bond of being near each other when they wanted or needed to be, like now. And right now, they wanted to kiss. So they did. Simple as that.

At first, it had been undeniably weird kissing a *guy*. From the outside, it didn’t seem like such a clear distinction, but to George, it was. The feeling of stubble against his cheek was foreign but strangely comforting, a reminder that this was different, but this was *Dream*. To kiss a neck that had an Adam’s Apple instead of a smooth curve of skin. Admittedly, it terrified George at first. Really, he used to have to fight against his own instincts to run away from whatever this was.

Not anymore, though. They were making progress. He’d be lying if he said he wasn’t still scared, but he wasn’t so shellshocked and terrified anymore.

George felt his foot brush over the smooth surface of the papers he was supposed to be reviewing, the action sending a few pages flapping from the bed to the floor, but he didn’t pay it any mind. All he could think about was Dream, how his arms were tight around him and beckoning him closer, closer, until his legs parted enough for George’s body to lay between them. At first, such actions would send an uncomfortable jolt up George’s limbs, an unpleasant sense of unfamiliarity. But now, it was something he was acquainted with. Dream made it easy to be comfortable as, even with the most well-masked feelings of discomfort, Dream somehow looked at him and knew what he was thinking and would assure George that any pace was the right pace. Dream taught George that when such things would happen to cause discomfort and Dream would say “we could just chill out and watch a movie,” he didn’t mean *I’m disappointed in you*. His assurances were genuine and heartfelt.

They’d come a long way already, and it had only been two or three weeks of this. Nowadays, George was comfortable. Together, they learned where to draw boundaries and when to stop. Maybe he had a very tight zone of things he *was* comfortable with at this point, but Dream of course, did not mind.

In a smooth movement, Dream wriggles around and, with the leverage of his arms wound tight around George’s middle, he flipped them around. George, knocked breathless, stared up at Dream from where he was pinned by his body weight. His face was illuminated with the soft hues of his LED lights, his hair soft and messy from George’s hands running all through it. He feels a flicker of pride at the presence of blush on Dream’s cheeks, and the clearly kiss-swollen lips. He recognizes the look Dream gives him, of searching his eyes for any signs he’d crossed a line. George smiles at him a little in a silent signal to him that he was fine, that there was no need to worry. Dream reciprocates the smile before diving right back into the kiss. Despite his dark

clothing and cocky attitude, George was convinced that Dream was the sweetest person on earth.

All it took was a pair of ice-cold hands slipping under his shirt and planting on his stomach for George to yelp, the noise making Dream pull back and laugh mischievously. George glowers at him and reaches for a pillow to wack him in the face with, but the two had been so lost in their own world that they forgot about one big problem:

Sapnap.

“George?” Sapnap’s voice was muffled now that George’s door was closed. “Are you jacking off?”

George mentally curses himself for getting a roommate that made it his life’s mission to embarrass him to death. However, at the approaching footsteps, George practically shoved Dream off of him and whisper-yelled “get under the bed, you idiot!” If it weren’t for the adrenaline buzzing through his veins, he might laugh at the sight of Dream scrambling across the floor and wriggling under the small frame of George’s bed just in time for the door to creak open.

“Uh,” George stammers. Sapnap raises a brow at him.

“What the hell were you up to in here?” Sapnap says, his body leaning against the sturdiness of the doorframe. George scratches the back of his head.

“Studying,” he says slowly, before his own eyes trail to the mess of papers all over his floor. He didn’t realize how much he had kicked them off.

“Mhm,” Sapnap says. Dang it. This was the problem with having a best friend with an incredibly dirty mind. “Sure you were. Wait...” Sapnap steps closer and closer to George, enough to really look at him. George gulps. “What *is* that?” George’s gaze follows Sapnap’s pointing finger and immediately freezes up. “Is that a hickie?!”

“Wuh-what?!” George quickly claps a hand over the portion of his neck Sapnap was fixated on. “No, no! I uh, I- burned myself? Wait no, I... I fell?!” George cringes. He was a terrible liar on the spot.

“Oh my *God*,” Sapnap says, eyes wide with disbelief while his mouth gathered in a shit-eating grin. “You were making out with someone *without* me?”

“Well... that *is* how it works,” George says slowly.

“HA!” Sapnap shouts victoriously, “got ya! I *knew* there was something going on with you, you’ve been acting so funny lately! So you admit that she’s in your room right now?”

“That is *not* what I-”

“You *animal*, Jesus Christ, man. By the way,” Sapnap starts, “if she has any cute friends, tell her to tell them that you have a really hot single friend.”

George deadpans. “Who, Karl?”

“No, you little-”

“Surely not Wilbur? You know he isn’t single, right?”

George snickers as Sapnap throws him one last glare and, after shouting a *I’ll figure out who that*

*mystery girl is, Georgie!* Sapnap left with a final slam of his door.

Dream crawled out from his hiding space and smiled apologetically. “Aha, I didn’t realize I did that...”

“You idiot,” George says, “we almost got caught! What do you *mean* you didn’t realize you fucking *bit* my neck-”

“I did not bite you!” Dream cries.

Thankfully it was a mild hickie, only a slight variation from his usual skin tone, so it would only take a few days to vanish. After nearly getting caught by Sapnap, the pair decided that they would move on from such activities. Instead, they did homework together until Dream fell asleep with his head in George’s lap.

Despite knowing that George would have to wake up early the next morning to sneak Dream out of his apartment undetected, he couldn’t find it in himself to shake Dream from his peaceful slumber.

So, he clicked off the lamp and the rest of his lights, set an alarm on his phone, and let sleep wash over him like a wave.

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One of the best things about music, George decided, was that it gives as much as you do.

Messing up in music wasn’t like messing up in a sport; if a runner were to take one step out of place, there was the possibility of twisting an ankle or pulling a muscle. However, if George misplaced his finger too close or too far from a fret, the instrument told him so with the unpleasant sound of a string vibrating for too long, or with the dissonance of a string that shouldn’t be in the given chord.

It was as if the instrument was telling him what to fix and how to do it right. Like an elastic band: if George pulled, it would snap back. The strings would give and give because he gave them his all.

George wasn’t much of a fan of singing while he was still trying to learn the chords for a song, still working out the kinks and licks and riffs. It made his brain feel as if it was overheating. So instead, once he was at a reasonable place with his songs, he would usually hum where the lyrics would go.

The light of his room was dim as it was the time of day when the sun had set mere minutes before, leaving the sky on the brink of darkness, but not quite. The last bits of sunlight still illuminated George’s room where the lamp was dim. When George started working on this song, the sky had been far higher in the sky.

The fingers of his right hand tugged at the corresponding strings. This was the type of song that required more of a plucking technique as opposed to strumming with one of the many plastic picks he seemed to have in every corner of his room. Concentrating, George switched from chord to chord, voicing the notes that mattered and humming to keep himself on track. He didn’t have a metronome going as he was trying to keep the tempo on his own, and to do so, he thought of the lyrics as he played.

*Who said it’s true*

*That the growing only happens on your own?*

*They don't know me and you*

“Sounds pretty,” comes a voice from the doorway. George tilts his head up enough to see Dream, leaned in his doorway, tea mug held in both hands.

“Thanks,” George says back. He gives the strings one last strum before casting the instrument aside. “I’ve been trying to learn some more acoustic stuff lately.”

“Well, it’s paying off. What song is that?”

“‘Grow As We Go’ by Ben Platt.” He hangs up the guitar on its respective hook on his wall before he gradually makes his way to where Dream was standing. “What’re you doing here?”

Dream shrugs. “Felt like saying hello.”

George passes by Dream to go into his kitchen to make himself his own cup of tea, listening as Dream filled him in about how the past few days had been for him. Nothing interesting, Dream had told him. But he listened as Dream told him about the house he’d built in Minecraft, and then about the cool song he found the other night and wanted to show George. He told him it would sound really good with his guitar.

“Sapnap isn’t home,” George says quietly as he focuses on the teabag bobbing in the boiling water of his mug. There was something cute about Dream coming in his apartment, making himself a cup of tea, and lurking around to see if George was there. Dream raises his brows at George.

“Oh?” he pipes up, “he isn’t, is he?” Dream sets down the mug next to where George’s tea was still steeping and, stepping close, he looks down at George with a sweet smile reserved for moments like this when they were alone. “Hi,” he murmurs.

“Hi,” George murmurs back. Dream taps the back of his thighs, and understanding instantly, George hops upward to sit on the kitchen counter. “Motherfucker,” he mutters under his breath, but it didn’t sound bitter as Dream being so close to him instantly made him smile, “this counter is so cold.”

Dream snickers against his lips before connecting them, sweet and slow as the sun went down, nobody in the world mattering but them. George felt their hands entwine, and their hearts did too, beating as one in the most insufferably romantic way possible. There was something so beautifully tragic about how Dream kissed him, because especially right now, George knew he would never, ever be kissed like this by someone else. No matter how far and wide he searched, surely no one else would know when to bite at his lip or tug him closer or hold his hand or whisper sweet nothings against his skin.

Then they heard the door clicking open.

They could’ve tried to scramble apart, to cool down the blush on their faces and pretend they hadn’t been up to anything, but it was already too late. Caught red-handed, Dream and George, still entwined, looked over to see no one other than Sapnap standing in the doorway holding a plastic bag that, by the smell of it, contained the Chinese takeout from across campus.

Sapnap dropped the takeout.

George felt Dream bury his face in his neck in embarrassment, and weakly, he meets Sapnap’s eyes. “Hi,” he says slowly.

“You, you two-” Sapnap’s eyes dart from the back of Dream’s head to George, whose face was

heating up more and more with each passing second. “You guys are- y’all are boning?”

George presses his lips together. “That’s... such a nice way to put it.” There was clear sarcasm to his tone.

Picking up his dropped Chinese food, Sapnap tears his eyes away from the unsolved scene before him, trudges across the kitchen, and mutters a whined “nothing makes sense anymore” before his bedroom door swings shut behind him.

“I should go talk to him,” George says. Dream finally gathers the courage to pull his face from George’s shoulder.

“Yeah... do you want me to come?”

“Don’t worry about it. I’ll meet you in my room?”

Dream shoots him a devious look. “We can watch that movie?”

“What, the romcom?”

“Oh yeah. I swear, I’ll make you love them almost as much as Drista.”

George snickers. “Fine, fine. It’s your turn to choose a movie anyway.” He hops off of the counter. “Finish making my tea, will you?”

“Yeah, yeah.”

Cautiously, George opens the door of his roommate and lets himself in before letting the blank door shut behind him. Sure enough, there was Sapnap, seated at his desk with his plastic fork in one hand and his phone cradled in the other. To no one’s surprise, Sapnap’s room was even messier than George’s with unfolded shirts on the floor and a crooked Metallica poster hanging above his bed on the wall. It had a very Sapnap-y charm to it.

“Hey,” George says. He leans his back against the door.

“Hi,” Sapnap says gruffly.

“Are you mad?” George says back.

“No.”

George raises a brow.

“Seriously, I’m not. That would be dumb.” Sapnap sets down his fork and swivels his chair to properly look at George. “I guess I’m just confused. I love you, brother, but I want to know what’s goin’ on.”

And so, George sat on the edge of Sapnap’s bed and told him. He told him how he felt like he had a connection with Dream, and together, they had been exploring it. He confirmed that no, he didn’t have a label for his sexuality, and neither did Dream, but he felt it was better that way. For him, being label-free was the label he needed. Trying to find a word for how he felt would do more harm than good for his situation.

When Sapnap asked, he told him how he and Dream weren’t officially anything, but they also weren’t officially nothing. He was confident that someday, he would have the courage to ask if he *wanted* to be something. But for now, he wasn’t ready for that.

“Just don’t get hurt,” Sapnap insists. “Make sure you’re communicating. I’d hate to see you get hurt.”

“He won’t hurt me,” George insists. “I trust him.” The words rang true, like even if he said them a million times over they wouldn’t lose meaning. He trusted Dream. He did. He trusted Dream with his apartment key just like he trusted Dream with his heart. He trusted him not to hurt him.

They looked at each other for a while, and after enough pleading, Sapnap let George salvage over what was left of his takeout as they talked about useless things like new video games or new songs they wanted to play for their next performance, and their last performance before Dream and George left for Paris.

“Hey,” Sapnap said before George saw himself out the door. “Dream’s changed you. I can tell.” Sapnap looked reminiscent as he said, “I’m happy for you, man. That fucker better know how lucky he is.”

Sapnap was right.

Dream had changed him.

George six months ago wouldn’t let anyone other than his bandmates get within a foot proximity of him without jumping away like a feral cat.

George six months ago wouldn’t dream of singing in front of an audience of thousands.

George six months ago would flinch at the prospect of letting people lift him off his tired feet when life was just too much.

“I’m the lucky one,” George says before he lets Sapnap ruffle up his hair. He disappears into his room to where Dream was waiting patiently.

He was the lucky one for sure.

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“Pretty good, huh?” Dream says as the credits of the movie roll. George yawns.

“I guess,” he admits. “I like the part where that guy-”

“Heath Ledger?”

“Yeah, him. I like when he went on the bleaches and sung the Sinatra song. That was pretty cool.”

Dream grins proudly. His face was lit by the bright text of the credits as the room surrounding them was pitch-dark. “I’m not usually a fan of big gestures, but that one was pretty good,” he says. George feels Dream’s hand toying with his hair. “Next, we’re watching ‘Say Anything.’”

George huffs. “Another romcom?”

“A classic.” Dream didn’t really come across as the kind who enjoyed movies outside of the action-adventure genre, but apparently his younger sister forced romantic comedies into his tastes which Dream was now trying to convert George into. “You sleepy?” Dream asks, his voice so quiet and fond it made George want to melt into the bedsheets. He mumbles in affirmation. “Let’s sleep, then.” He shuts the computer and sets it aside and, now with the free space between them, George feels Dream lean over and manually move George closer to him.

“What was that movie called again?” George whispers.

““Ten Things I Hate About You.””

“Mm,” George mutters, already half asleep. “My mum likes that one.”

He fell asleep to the smell of Dream’s hair and the feeling of a warm hand gently rubbing along his back as a successful lure to sleep.

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As the big red circle on George’s calendar signifying the beginning of their Paris trip drew closer and closer, it was hard to believe how few days had passed. Exams flew by along with low-pressure performances at the SMP. Nights that faded into sunrises spent behind computer screens and study guides blurred into one mass of anticipation.

Until the morning finally came. George, with his suitcase already packed as it had been for nights before, hopped into the passenger’s side of Dream’s truck as the two, sleep deprived and drunk off of excitement, buzzed the entire car ride to the apartment. They chattered all the way through airport security, through the half hour they spent waiting at the foul-smelling airplane gate, and on the flight fancy enough to have shitty old TV screens on the back of each seat. The chairs, despite the amount of cushion on them, were still somehow uncomfortable, yet they talked about the foods they would try and the things they would see all the way until George fell asleep. He didn’t realize he was asleep until he woke up with his head on Dream’s shoulder as, over the loud speakers, the flight attendant victoriously announced, “welcome to France!”

Sleepily, Dream grinned down at him before both, with a childlike excitement, leaned over to see everything the small oval airplane window would let them. Beyond the expanses of the planes and the blockish building of the airport, George tried to see the Eiffel Tower, which he couldn’t, but maybe he he squinted enough he could.

“I can’t believe it,” George says, “we’re actually here.”

“I’m gonna eat so much fuckin’ butter,” Dream says, and George laughs enough that the flight attendant gives him an unimpressed look.

He didn’t care.

“Ready?” George asks once they waited at the spinning doors of the airport. His legs felt jello-y after lack of use for so long, and everything seemed way more funny than it was now that he really hadn’t slept well in a long time. Airplane sleep seemed about a quarter as sufficient as normal sleep.

“Ready,” Dream affirms. He takes his hand, gives it a squeeze, and together, the two step through the spinning doors and breathe in the French air.

## Chapter End Notes

anyways next chapter will be all about the escapades in Paris >:)

# Worldstar Money

## Chapter Notes

Pretty long chapter, mostly snippets of scenes from traveling. After the next chapter it'll be back to the usual plot :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

### *Dream*

“No, no. It’s *pah*. But not exactly. It’s kind of like *paahck*, like you’re spitting- don’t act like you’re about to spit on me, you animal!”

Laughter fills their cramped hotel room. The two were huddled on the bed where they were supposed to be taking a nap after their long plane ride, but both were far too excited to adventure in the city. So, they decided to rest in the form of George attempting to teach Dream some common phrases in French, a task that Dream hadn’t anticipated to be so hard.

“*Pah*,” Dream mimics, yet he cringed as soon as the syllable left his mouth too harsh and too rough to truly be as George had said it before. Though George insisted he wasn’t fluent, he sounded so graceful when he spoke in the other language.

“Close,” George lies. They both laugh more. “But close enough, I think. The next part kinda sounds like...” George’s eyes flicker up to the ceiling in thought. “It sounds sorta like *leh*. Or um... *lay*.” Dream snickers at George’s attempt at imitating an American accent.

“...*leh*?” Dream says uncertainly. George nods enthusiastically.

“Yes, yes! Just like that! Then is the last bit, I think we can do it all at once. It’s *voo, ahng, leh*.”

Dream blinks.

Slowly, George sounds a syllable, and Dream repeated it back to him, like an infant trying to simulate the feeling of words and how they feel when spoken. French was difficult, Dream decided. *Very* difficult. But George made it seem so easy.

“*Parlez-vous anglais?*” George says. (Or: *pahlay-voo ahngleh?* as George had explained it. The translation was *do you speak English?*)

“I think this is a lost cause,” Dream snickers after four or five attempts of trying to repeat it back. No matter how many times he tried, his tongue seemed to simply not roll with a French accent. “We’ll get it by the end of the trip,” George assures him with an affirming pat on the back.

The two rise from where they had been sitting criss-cross in the middle of the single hotel room bed. Though the room felt like a shoebox, neither complained as on the far side was a nearly wall-sized window with a beautiful view of the Eiffel Tower whose peak perched above the rest of the buildings as if it was watching over them like a guardian angel. They take turns freshening up in the bathroom and pulling on jackets as, helpfully announced by the pilot of their flight, the temperatures sat around the fifty-degrees-Fahrenheit range.



“Ready?” Dream asks once George emerges from the bathroom. He holds out a hand for George to take after he throws one end of his black, thick scarf over his shoulder.

“Ready,” George repeats. The two nudge the door shut behind them before Dream promptly shouts “race you!” over his shoulder and, in a second, his boot-clad feet raced across the old carpeting of the hotel hallway. “Wait!” George cried from behind him, “I don’t even know where the elevator is!”

Dream was chortling up a storm as he sprinted past the rows of identical faded-white doors with their metallic numbers blurring past him as his feet pounded onto the floor, one after the other. He rounded corner after corner, half a mind thinking about how George might get lost, yet the giggling and whining behind him was enough to signal that he was hot on his tail.

Unsurprisingly, Dream beat George to the elevator by a good ten or fifteen seconds though, through labored breaths and a clear sweat he’d broken into, George denied it profusely.

“You’ve lost your hand-holding privileges,” George teases, and it was a threat he didn’t loosen up on even with Dream’s most successful pouts and puppy eyes. (But, halfway down the street, George took Dream’s hand without thought when he was in the middle of explaining something to him, unoccupied hand pointing to the unfolded map he held.)

“Let’s stop for a coffee,” Dream pipes up, and before George could open his mouth, he said, “and no, we won’t need to pretend we’re married this time.”

George snickers. “That was all you, Dream. You and your *passionately making love*-”

“Oh my God-”

Once the two had their respective coffees, they unanimously agreed to take a seat at the round circular table alongside the front outside patio of the cafe. Already, Dream was in love with the atmosphere of Paris; despite the pollution and the lingering scent of cigarettes and flaky pastries, the city had an undeniable charm. There was something fascinating about walking down streets filled with people speaking fluently in a language he couldn’t pick a single word out of. He felt as if he had dropped into a world he hadn’t dared to explore before, yet with George by his side, he felt as if this was a world he could conquer.

The cafe they found themselves seated at was small but well-decorated with dangling lights and soft wood tones. The exterior was painted with dark, wispy ivy that dripped all the way down the side of the building. Inside the cafe were decorative bookshelves and an atmosphere filled with buzzing people.

The next adventure on their list was to figure out the Metro (the subway equivalent of Paris) as, despite the city being rather small in square miles, every travel guide online advised that it would save time and energy. It took many unfolded maps and much of George’s broken French to figure out, and Dream was sure they would’ve given up if not for the caffeine in their system, yet once they found themselves seated on the plastic bench of the Metro and surrounded by people holding onto the overhead metal bars to keep from swaying with the velocity of the underground train, Dream figured it was worth it.

“Tired?” Dream asks in a soft voice as he feels George’s head rest on his shoulder. George nods slowly. “We’re almost at our stop.” George doesn’t reply, “hey, don’t fall asleep on me.” Dream gives George’s side a prod, but George only whines some muffled words into his neck and scoots his body closer to Dream’s. It was interesting, really, how they were free to be close and free in public as everyone around them didn’t so much as spare them a glance. Most people were either

buried in their phones or chatting with others on the train car, likely not even noticing the two cuddled-together lovebirds in the far corner.

“Five more minutes,” Dream urges. He looks ahead at the scrolling text on the train, beside the map with each stop illuminated. In the small, robotic red text, he read the time as just past 6:00 PM. George groans unintelligibly and, ignoring Dream’s protests of staying awake so he wouldn’t wake up so early the next morning, he invited himself to crawl into Dream’s lap, curl up, and go to sleep.

Of course Dream didn’t wake him. He wasn’t a monster. Instead, he sighed, looked down at him fondly, held him close, and swore to himself that he would protect George forever.

By some miracle, Dream managed to guide a very sleepy George through the underground workings of the Metro, up the stairs, down the short stretch of street, into the hotel and in the elevator. Of their short time together as something of an item, Dream made the lovely discovery that George was clingy when sleep-deprived. It was unmistakably adorable how he would nuzzle his face in Dream’s neck and say sentences that didn’t quite make sense due to the slurring of the words.

“There’s a pool?” Dream pipes up as his finger hovers over the button for the fourth floor.

The two were far too excited to check out the pool to go up to their room first. There was no use anyway as neither had proper swim trunks. Boxers would have to do.

So, the pair made their way to the lower floor where the pool was located, navigated through the winding halls, and halted in the wide, chlorine-reeking room where the blank walls were flooded with the beautiful reflections of the waves casted by the pool. It was small, long and rectangular, but more than enough length for two.

They stripped down, clothes disposed on the plastic pool chairs, and ventured into the cool temperature of the water. George sucks his breath in and Dream watches the goosebumps gather and spread along George’s arms.

“Cold?” Dream tests.

“This certainly woke me up,” George says. Dream laughs. Together, they dunked their heads and treaded in the deeper water of the pool. They raced back and forth, had cannon-ball competitions, and acted like two middle school boys set free in a pool paradise.

In the middle of some variation of tag, Dream lunged for George from behind, practically tackling him into a backwards embrace. The act spooked George enough for him to emit an on-brand shriek, so loud that Dream feared the floors of people between them and the top of the building all would have heard how George’s screeching reverberated off of the walls of the indoor pool, yet both were too intoxicated with maniacal laughter to truly care.

However, from where Dream hugged George, chest pressed to George’s back, they didn’t let go even as the laughter died. Slowly, it was as if they sobered up from their haze and came back to earth. The air left Dream’s lungs as George swiveled around, facing them together, and in wonder he watches as George’s eyes stare into his. Wide and inquisitive as always.

George’s dark, damp hair hung over his eyes, unruly and messy, his pale arms folding over his own bare torso. His head tilts up enough to meet Dream’s eyes.

“Hi,” Dream murmurs.

“Hi,” George murmurs back. They had a habit of doing that, of getting close and greeting each other as if it was the first time they had seen each other all day.

“Wanna kiss?” Dream asks obnoxiously. George rolls his eyes.

“Maybe if you would shrink a few inches,” George tuts, “I could actually get to your face.”

(The inches of height separating them didn’t stop them before, and they surely didn’t stop them now as the two found away around it as always.)

Eventually, Dream discovered his neck didn’t appreciate the craning over to kiss George as he must’ve slept on it funny during the plane ride, so as a solution, he scooped him up in his arms and promptly set him on the poolside.

“Ha,” George murmurs, “I’m taller than you now.”

Dream makes a face at him. “Enjoy it while you can.”

He sure did.

They gradually dragged themselves from the pool and to their awaiting pile of clothes. They only bothered with shirts as pulling on denim jeans over wet skin seemed like a special kind of torture neither wanted to indulge in. Thankfully, no one came into the elevator while they were in it, and even as they left, there were small pools of water left behind that had dripped from their hair. Standing in boxers as a swimsuit and shirts that clung to their skin wasn’t exactly presentable.

Until Dream dug in his pockets, front and back, to realize he forgot his hotel room key in the room.

George did the same.

“I’ll come back down with you,” George insisted, but the poor guy’s eyes were practically already closed.

“Stay here,” Dream says. “I’ll take care of it.”

(And he did. He went downstairs, in his underwear, tiny towel draped uselessly around his shoulders as he went to the front desk and asked for a copy of his room key. He tried his best to ignore the stares boring into the back of his head as he waited for the plastic key to be placed in his awaiting hands, and practically scampered back upstairs to find George nearly asleep in the hallway.)

They fell asleep around 8 PM, curled in each other’s arms smelling of the same hotel shampoo, wrapped in a warmth Dream still felt spoiled to have.

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The atmosphere was heavy when Dream first woke up.

The world was dark and so was the hotel room, and Dream opened his eyes to empty arms.

Momentarily confused, he turned his head to find that he had rolled over to the other side of the bed in his sleep. He must’ve let go of George some time during the night. Through his bleary vision, he saw the numbers on the alarm clock beside his head reading as 12:03 AM. Looking over to where George lay beside him, Dream was surprised to discover that he was awake.

He was about to ask why he was awake until he noticed the look of dread on George’s face.

Slowly, Dream's eyes averted to the vibrating phone clutched in his hands, and the illumination his phone screen cast onto his face.

Dream wriggled across the bed, enough that he could lean his head near George's and see his phone screen. Surely enough, George's phone buzzed with an incoming call from his mom.

"George," Dream mutters, and his voice seemed to be enough to snap George from his trance. They meet eyes through the too-bright light cast from George's still-ringing phone. Cautiously, he wraps a hand around George's and, watching him carefully, he takes the phone from him. George lets him. Dream declines the call, silences George's phone, and sets it face-down on the bedside table. His vision is fuzzy again as it adjusts to the darkness.

"Sorry," George whispers. "I dunno why she's-"

"Shhh," Dream hushes, pulling him close once again and, before thinking twice about it, pressing a soft kiss to the center of his forehead. "Go back to sleep. We can talk about it in the morning."

They fell asleep again, but this time, neither of them rolled away from their sleeping embrace. When they would wake in a few hours, they would wake in each other's arms.

Dream fell asleep and woke up to the same fear that he was moving too fast. That he was getting to comfortable. Maybe they weren't *physically* going too quickly, but Dream worried his heart was already so attached to George after such little time. He felt like now they were in public, now they were free, he didn't want it to be any other way. He loved how comfortable George was with him here, so much less tense and alert than back in America. He loved how George initiated so much here, from crawling in his lap on a public train to kissing in a pool. He loved how he could kiss him and not have to worry about locking a door, or checking the apartment for roommates.

Dream worried that when they flew across the Atlantic once again to return to the world they sought to escape, he wouldn't be ready to hide once again.

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As they had four more days to spend in the city, Dream and George weren't too concerned about cramming their days full of activity.

Instead, they arose to the feeling of warm late-morning sunlight and took their time getting out of bed, taking turns in the bathroom and layering up for the chilly weather awaiting them outside the sanctuary of the hotel.

Their first stop was the coffee shop they discovered the day before, and their next was to the Louvre Museum of Art. Instead of taking the Metro, they decided to walk their way to the glass pyramid of a museum and get a taste for what it felt like to walk down the streets of Paris as if this was their home.

"Do you think we blend in, Dream?" George had whispered in his ear as they walked along, as if he were indulging him on some big secret. Dream took one glance around them to see the other passing people in far fewer layers with a held poise that made them all seem physically different than them in an elegant way. It was as if the people of Paris had an achieved grace that foreigners couldn't grasp; Dream found it fascinating.

"No," Dream whispered back, snickering, "we don't blend in at all."

With the hand that wasn't occupied holding his coffee, he held George's hand inside his pocket as they both were regretting the decision to not bring gloves. Aside from handing the guard at the

entrance of the museum their tickets, Dream didn't let go of George's hand much. Sometimes, George would let go to wander from the painting Dream found himself staring up at to venture onto another.

Dream was never big on museums; especially as a child, he found them tedious and boring. But with George at his side, who seemed determined to read every plaque and, in a hushed voice as if to not scare away the pieces of art, he would point out how beautiful the paint strokes were, or how the intricacy of the background was so interesting to him.

Dream knew, he knew he was supposed to be looking at the paintings, supposed to be reading the plaques and staring at the paint strokes and wondering, as he looked at the blank faces in the paintings, what the artist was intending to bring with their work. He knew that he had, in fact, paid to come to the museum to walk across the pools of smooth dark tile and be lost in the crowd of admirers as if he was lost in a crowd of unheeding cattle; of course, Dream didn't do such a thing.

He looked at George instead.

George, with his puffy jacket that made his arms poke out and his cheeks turn rosy, and his layered shirts underneath, and the simple dark pants with his usual sneakers. How his eyes would light up and how he would, likely unknowingly, tug on the edge of Dream's sleeve to catch his attention.

*Out of all the pieces of art in this museum, Dream thought as he followed George down arched corridors, George is the most beautiful.*

He did enjoy the museum, however. Despite being unable to see more than the top half of the Mona Lisa's head due to the unholy amount of people shoving about for a mere glance, it was incredible to see a painting he had only ever seen behind the light of a phone screen. This was the beauty of traveling.

---

"So," George said once the two finally weaved their way out of the crowd of the Louvre and into the cool Paris air, "what do you think the prettiest piece of art was?"

"You," Dream blurts in a single breath, and at first he was so sure that had been nothing more than a mere thought that crossed his mind until he watched the slow but sure spread of blush across George's cheeks. "Did I say that out loud?" Dream says in a tone that, alone, could reveal his flusteredness as his own face heated up in a second.

Throwing his head back, George laughed. Really, really laughed, the kind of laugh Dream had only heard a handful of times. It felt like a shooting star, seeing him like this; not concerned about the people passing around them and looking at Dream like they were the only two in the world.

Eventually, Dream joined in, hiccuping back the louder spurts of cackling laughter as the two laughed at one another for no reason in particular other than the one that no one was stopping them.

"You're such an idiot," George muttered, but his face was still pink (and not just from the weather).

"I am," Dream says, sighing, and he presses a soft kiss to the top of George's head before saying, "come on, let's get lost in Paris."

---

Over the next few days, Dream learned a lot more about both Paris and George.

He learned all about George's love for chocolate and his fascination with mocha lattes and going into book stores with no intention to actually *buy* any of the books just like he learned all about how the Eiffel Tower glittered in the moonlight as if pixie dust had been dropped all over it.

Dream also learned about the Metro, and how mesmerizing it was to gaze out the window only to be met with the sight of the dark blurred wall whizzing by his vision. It was even more mesmerizing how George, especially when tired, seemed to just slump on him without a care for anyone looking. Dream would never get over the feeling of butterflies and their wings that tapped against his heart when he would look beside him on their train ride to see the passing lights wash over George's face in orange lighting before fading into the dim darkness again.

"We should get souvenirs," George starts one afternoon as they were halfway through a lunch of matching baguette sandwiches and sodas. "Y'know, something so we can remember this forever."

"That's the cheesiest thing you've maybe ever said," Dream says through a mouthful of sandwich. George laughs at him and bumps his knee under the table.

They go off and look for souvenirs anyway as they had both gotten bored of museums and the task of attempting to get Dream to say *Parlez-vous anglais?* with proper pronunciation. First, they stopped in one of the many bookstores George had already browsed in, going up and down the spiral wooden staircase and basking in the scent of old paper and the many candles littered around the tables. Then, they looked at the most touristy of shops only to find no success; the only interesting aspect was how Dream and George had a miniature competition of who could put on the most plastic Eiffel Tower sunglasses. (The cashier was far from impressed, and the two were shown the way out the door along with some fast-paced and angry-sounding French that Dream wasn't even close to comprehending. When he had turned to George for an answer, the man only shrugged and said, "what ever words they were saying are certainly not in my vocabulary.")

"Now this," Dream says, "is something I can see myself buying."

They had wandered into a jewelry shop in curiosity, and while the main attraction was to the necklaces and bracelets, Dream had immediately been drawn to the display case of rings near the back of the store. The cashier had kindly unlocked the case for him to browse through and try on rings from. He feels George peek over his shoulder.

"Ooh," George sing-songs. "I like these."

"Would you wear them?" Dream asks.

"No," George laughs, "but you would." George helps Dream sort through the rings by offering opinions and suggestions, and after a few minutes, they managed to narrow the selection down to one ring: a simple and silver band with a subtle yet beautiful engraving of a sun.

However, once Dream delicately sets the ring on the counter to check out, the cashier looked between the two of them, back at the ring, and offered a soft, sweet smile. "Usually," she says, voice gentle and hidden within a thick accent, "you buy these in a pair. Sun," she points to the engraving before rummaging around the drawer below her, hands twitching slightly as she sets another ring beside it, "moon." Surely enough, the matching ring had a corresponding moon engraving, and in an instant, the two looked to each other in question.

"You don't wear rings much though," Dream says, looking at George's blank fingers and back to his own ring-clustered hands. "We don't have to."

George shrugs, “I could put it on a chain and wear it as a necklace.”

On cue, the cashier brought out a thin silver chain, an act that settled the deal of the purchase of both rings. The ring slipped right onto Dream’s finger, and George’s ring necklace suited him nicely. Dream as the sun and George as the moon seemed fitting in some way that Dream couldn’t quite put his finger on.

But even as they went to sleep that night, both with tired feet and wide smiles, Dream noticed how the chain of George’s necklace peaked out from the neck of his shirt. Something told Dream that he wouldn’t be taking off that necklace any time soon, and in all honesty, Dream didn’t want him to.

---

Despite being in the most gorgeous location, Dream could sense the wish to play music both in himself and George. His hands ache as there were no drumsticks clutched in them, his feet longed to thump against the pedal of the bass drum and his fingers wished to grace along the keys of the piano. When he looked at George, stare blank as he stared at his own Spotify account, Dream knew he was thinking a similar thing.

So, when George went back up to their hotel room to take a nap before they would set out into the city again, Dream decided to get him something. Naturally, he couldn’t take his drum set to Paris, and George didn’t bring his guitar. But, he thought he found an instrument that was better than nothing.

“Hey,” Dream murmured as he sat on the edge of the pillowy white comforter of the bed. George looked as if he was buried in the layers of fluffy blankets and sheets. In one hand, he held the plastic bag in which his small gift awaited. In the other, he was attempting to poke George to wake him. George gives a groan and rolls over. “George,” Dream tries again, yet his voice remained steady and soft, “wake up. You’ve been napping for a while now.”

Gradually, George cracks his eyes open, enough to see Dream ahead of him and, in a swoop, he rolled onto his back and practically tugged Dream onto him, an action taking them both by surprise as Dream found himself laying flat on George, their bodies separated by the thick layers of blankets and Dream’s coat he still hadn’t taken off. The cold still clung to his clothes, but George didn’t seem to care as he eased Dream closer, closer, before fully kissing him just how they both liked to; soft, slow, not rushing, not taking too much yet not providing too little. Dream almost forgot about the plastic bag he held in his hands as it dropped to the floor along with the shoes he nudged off and the coat George generously helped him with.

“Mm,” Dream hums as he pulls away for a second. “I almost forgot about something,” he murmurs, George’s breath still on his lips. George’s eyes focused and unfocused on his face as Dream felt George’s hands clutch to the material of his shirt.

“Oh,” George whispers. “Did you?”

Dream could laugh at how out of it George was between just waking up from both his slumber and their kiss, but instead, he smiled down fondly at him and pulled up the bag from where he had dropped it on the floor. From the bag, he pulled out a wooden, hallow instrument by its neck; a ukulele.

George nudges himself upward enough to sit properly as Dream sets the ukulele in his lap. “I noticed how much you missed playing guitar,” Dream said, “and I miss playing music too, so I was thinking you could teach me a thing or two about ukulele.”

The ukulele was a yellow, happy color, and it looked even happier as George held the small instrument in his lap as if it were something far more precious and delicate. In an instant, his eyes lit up with a child-like wonder, and in curiosity, Dream watched as George's hands smoothed over the surface of the wood and paint. "Wow," George murmurs as he gives the four strings an experimental strum. He meets Dream's eyes with a sweet, unfiltered smile. "Thank you, Dream. That was really sweet of you." Grinning, he strums the ukulele a little more.

"Can you play at all?" Dream asks.

"Nope," George admits. "But I'll figure something out."

And he did.

After the two spent an evening full of fancy food and wandering around the waterfront of the River Seine, they returned to the hotel to mess around in the pool some and take warm showers before retreating to their bed. It was then that Dream rested his head in George's lap and listened as he tried to learn the workings of the instrument. "Are you sure you don't mind?" George had asked him on many occasions. "I'll stop if you want to go to sleep."

"No," Dream insisted. He looked upward at George, "this is perfect." And it was. Once Dream felt his conscious drifting into sleep, he listened carefully as George played his first chord progression with near perfection aside from a few reverberating strings. It was beautiful, a simple song Dream couldn't put his finger on.

*This is perfect.*

When Dream opened his eyes the next morning to find George with a ukulele resting on his chest, he smiled.

It really was.

---

In their few remaining days in Paris, Dream and George tried to soak up the culture as much as humanly possible. They stood under the Eiffel Tower and look upwards at it and even resided to taking the most cringe-worthy, touristy selfies beside it. They stuffed themselves full of pastries and mocha lattes and baguette sandwiches on their way over to the Arc de Triomphe.

"*Champs-Élysées*," George says as he points to the street sign. Apparently this street was the main street of Paris, connecting the beautiful piece of architecture that was the Arc all the way down to an amusement park on the other end of the wide, long street. Dream found great joy in standing at the end of the road and looking down it, and taking a deep inhale of the cigarette city smell. He felt so small when he saw how tall the buildings were with their intricate architecture and all their glory; he felt insignificant when he saw how massive the Eiffel Tower was and how he was merely a face of a wide crowd around him. It was beautiful, being so insignificant. There was something wonderful about being in a place where nothing mattered.

"Come again?" Dream replies. George giggles.

"*Champs-Élysées*," George says again, yet as he reads Dream's baffled expression, he tries again. "*Sh-ah-nn-ss ahh-lee-zey*," George tries. Dream attempts to repeat it back, but the words didn't seem to want to roll off of his tongue. George gives his hand a squeeze. "It's okay," George assures him. "You'll get it one of these days. Wanna get a mocha?"

Dream would never stop admiring George's patience.



They made sure to make the most of their last nights by staying up incredibly late just walking about the city and returning to spend what was remaining of the evening either in the hotel pool or going back up to the room where they would turn on the TV to watch a French drama that George would kindly translate what he could understand. However, the two would decide to fill in the gaps with their imaginations, but in Dream's opinion, that made the movie watching far more interesting.

Every night before the two would call it a night, George would take out the little yellow ukulele from the bedside table and play a song, and proceed to attempt to teach it to Dream. No matter how hard he tried and tried, Dream's fingers didn't seem willing to press into the frets against the thick strings of the instrument, but with every successful chord, the two would cheer and hop about on the bed.

"I'll miss you, Paris," George says with a clear reminiscing to his tone once the two are seated in their respective train seats. This train had seats of cushion and the window looked out upon scenery of the outdoors instead of the damp, dark walls of the underground tunnels of the Metro. Dream places his palm against the window in a silent motion to show his gratitude to the city and all it had given him in these past few days; a ring, a ukulele, and a whole lot of good memories he knew he would always hold dear.

The two sat in silence as, once the train set off to Bayeux (*Bay-yoo* as George taught him to pronounce), they watched as the beautiful city of Paris shrank smaller and smaller with each stretch of the train tracks.

"We'll come back," Dream says. He looks down at the silver ring on his right index finger, and the little engraved sun that would always serve as a reminder that the universe had a kind of balance. The sun and the moon are opposites, yet they live in harmony. Dream and George seemed so polar from the outside, yet on the inside, they needed each other. Dream was sure they would be back here if they wanted to be, because they were strong. He would miss the easy routine of vacation where their usual anxieties weren't applicable, and he would miss the ability to sleep beside George night after night as opposed to the rare one-night-per-week if they were lucky.

But there was still time.

Four more days.

Dream was holding on to them.

---

Normandy was the perfect contrast to the urban plunge Dream and George had been experiencing to the last few days.

Upon stepping off the train, Dream could practically smell the difference from here and the city. Cigarettes didn't seem to cling to the atmosphere as much, and the lingering scent of flowers and the outdoors was more prevalent than before. The small town seemed like a textbook fairytale town with stone bridges and little brooks of rivers and fields of wildflowers along the grassy outskirts of the area. Despite the train station being in the sweet town of Bayeux, Dream and George had rented a small house further into the countryside.

Equally exhausted, Dream and George had stepped into their house expecting another shoebox hotel-room-sized joint where they would drop their bags, trudge in, collapse on the bed and pass out despite it only being the afternoon (they had had many late nights... not doing anything interesting, unless you counted making fun of poorly-plotted French dramas as interesting).

However, they did no such thing.

The house was beautiful.

It was more of a cottage with charming off-white paint and a big fireplace in the living room. The entire setup screamed coziness, including the small brightly painted kitchen that had a wide selection of tea and corresponding tea kettles on display. All around the windows were flower boxes filled with lavender and lined with light blue shutters. The house was small yet adorable, and while Dream didn't care much about housing as he was perfectly satisfied with his small apartment, he was entranced by the charm of this home.

Instead of sleeping as they probably should, Dream and George dropped their bags beside the door, nudged off their shoes, and explored around the place. They discovered the big "Narnia closet" as George called it, which was an impressive wardrobe that, if laid sideways, was about as long as Dream's apartment bathroom. They also discovered that the cottage had a small yard with a rose garden and a weathered bird fountain with a grassy patch perfect for picnics. And, leaned beside the door, they found matching baby blue bikes with white bike bells that George found particularly satisfying.

"Gotta go try out the bed," George insists as he abandons his investigating of the kitchen and vanishes into the bedroom. Dream laughs, but follows him.

He hears the squeaking of the mattress and the content sigh enough to know that the bed was, to George's standards, satisfactory, yet Dream figured he better give it a try too as he leapt onto the wood-framed bed. Where the hotel room's bed had been covered in blank comforter, this bed was drowning in plush and softness.

Silently, the two look to one another. The sun was coming through the blinds, just barely hanging on before it was going to sink below the horizon. The strips of light painted along George's body, illuminating his eyes in hues of gold and his hair in shades of amber. Something told Dream to scoot closer, to get close to him. He did.

"Hi," Dream whispers.

"Hi," George whispers back. Dream relishes in the feeling of George's hands slowly crawling to the back of his head where he felt fingers twirling mindlessly in his hair.

"Wanna... make out?" Dream says, voice still hushed. George laughs, a sharp exhale against his lips before, despite George's proclamations of calling Dream an idiot, they kiss anyway.

It felt perfect. *Too* perfect. So perfect it scared him.

It was scary, Dream thought, as they kissed. They must've kissed a million times before through pecks to the forehead to something more serious, but not as much like this. Not the shirt tugging, the hair pulling, the heavy breathing and the rushed kisses. Hesitant, he reached for George's hand and squeezed it before pulling his face back. When he looked down at George, suddenly, this felt very real. When they kissed, he felt as if he was swimming in a wide ocean with his eyes closed, body filled with a courage and fearlessness as he confidently navigated through. But when he pulled away, looking down, it was as if he was surfacing and was forced to sober up and realize just how real this was. How real *George* was, under him, holding his hand, panting.

Dream noticed the slight tremor to his hand. "Are you okay?" he asks quietly. George nods convincingly. "We don't have to," he starts.

“I want to,” George assures him. He meets his eyes. “I... I trust you.” His chest swells. “I want this.” Dream feels George’s thumb graze against the back of his hand. “Do you?”

Dream smiles a little. “Of course I do,” he says, breathless. He presses one, two, three kisses to the underside of George’s jaw. “It’s just... it’s been a while.”

George huffs a laugh, “yeah... I get you on that one.”

George pulls his face up for another kiss, this one less hungry and consuming and more heartfelt, sweet. Dream, through soft touches to his sides and gentle squeezes to his hand, was trying to tell him to trust him more, unspoken promises that he wasn’t going to hurt him.

He never would.

Not if he could help it.

Dream leaned his arm over the bed, and turned off the light.

## Chapter End Notes

now this is fruity

# No, the Moon

## Chapter Notes

<https://twitter.com/labbyrinths/status/1387505666969849857>

go check out this fan art wtf!!!!!! I'm absolutely blown away by the talent! Thanks so much!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

### *George*

The first time George heard Dream play the piano to his full capability was by accident.

It had been during their second day in Normandy, a few hours after their lazy morning following their equally lazy night. They didn't end up leaving the cottage in the evening as they were far too comfortable in each other's arms in bed, and they woke up as such. George would never forget the scenery he blinked his eyes open to, of the blankets of warm sunlight covering Dream's form where the soft sheets of the bed didn't.

After adventuring outside in the backyard for a short duration to retrieve a few flowers to place in a vase beside the bed, George decided to hop on his bike and get some groceries for dinner while Dream prepared a nice brunch for the two of them. "You," Dream had said with an accusatorially pointed finger, "are staying the *hell* away from the kitchen." It was a fair demand if George's past cooking experiences were absolutely anything to go off of.

But George stood in the doorway, cloth grocery bag still hooked over his elbow, as he was drawn to the sound of the out-of-tune piano like a moth to light. He lingered as he watched Dream play the upright piano the two had discovered in the corner of their bedroom. Despite the layer of dust coating the keys, it was a pretty instrument that harnessed a deep mahogany color. And despite its clear lack of tuning, Dream played it beautifully.

George recognized the tune as "Claire de Lune" by Claude Debussy, and despite hearing many renditions of the song over the years, this was hands-down the best by a long shot.

Dream was clearly a master of the keyboard, and even as his overgrown yet charming locks of dirty blonde hair fell as a mask over his face, George suspected he could play the piece with his eyes closed. Dream's hands seemed to know what to do without guidance as they glided up octave after octave with a delicately crafted elegance that never broke even as the intensity of the song rose. George watched as Dream's fingers pressed to the keys, strong chords harsh and brash yet absolutely beautiful all the same.

He wondered how Dream could control such a complicated left hand melody along with an equally complicated right hand with juxtaposing dynamics that ebbed and flowed with the melody. George found himself hanging onto every note as the melody rose into the higher register of the keys, the sounds light and tinkly, painting a scene of a flower petal dancing in the wind, or capturing the sound of rain drops on glass.

He thought he could cry as he listened to the final resolving notes of the song, conclusive and retreating like a wave to a larger sea.

Then Dream looked up, as if rising to the top of the ocean of music he had just crafted.

“George?” Dream murmurs, momentary surprise washing over his face. George became acutely aware of how he was lingering in the doorway like some creep, his grocery bag still hanging from his arm.

“Sorry,” he says. “It’s just.... Wow, Dream, why didn’t you tell me you were so *good*?”

Dream gives a polite laugh. “Thank you. I’ll teach you after we eat, just so you can see how it feels to be taught something that makes no sense.”

George makes a face at him, fully knowing Dream was referring to George’s attempts at teaching him French. “Yeah, yeah. But seriously. You should play another song for me sometime...” He smiles bashfully, “that was really amazing.”

“I will,” Dream says as he lifts himself from the piano bench and tucks his hair away from his face.

“I’ll hold you to that,” George echoes, and together, they ventured to the small kitchen to eat the meal Dream had made for the two of them.

Their little cottage in the heart of Normandy seemed like something of a haven. They put together a kind of routine that, unlike their time in Paris, was full of music. George would wake up to the sound of Dream playing one of Chopin’s Nocturnes on their out-of-tune piano, and he decided that the sound of gentle keys was far better than any alarm could be. Then, once George got out of bed, the two would hop on their matching bikes and venture down the thin dirt path that lead to the nearest town, where they would get coffees and groceries and little trinkets to remember their time they spent here together.

“I think this trip calls for some spice,” George says, loud enough that Dream could hear him from where he stood on the other side of the grocery aisle. Dream peaks at him through the cracks between the boxes of products, enough to see the ambitious wine bottle George was holding out in front of him. Dream raises a brow at him.

“Oh yeah?” he laughs. “Say less, Georgie.”

The rest of that night was a blur. They biked home in the moonlight, wine bottle sitting in the front basket of George’s bike, and though they started their trek with the intent to race, they lagged and stopped to admire the creek alongside the property of their cottage, and how the babbling waters absorbed all of the moon’s glow. Between half-full glasses of shitty grocery store wine, George remembered snippets of what they were up to. Dancing around the kitchen and blasting music so loud that they were lucky their house was in the middle of nowhere; eating most of the pantry for no apparent reason and proceeding to play music on their shared yellow ukulele with, likely, very poor execution; or, later in the night, when they had resorted to half-kissing half-laughing, and mixing the taste of cheap wine and each other to something magical.

All of it was worth it, even when George lifted his head from his pillow the next morning with a head-splitting ache. He groaned, finding the sun too bright and the soft chirping of the birds outside too loud, yet once he gazed at Dream beside him, his headache seemed to dull. Dream’s back was turned to him, and like some kind of ancient Greek sculpture, the sheets of the bed draped around his body as if placed by an artist of the Louvre museum they had visited not long ago. He was art, George decided, as he looked at the freckles dusted along his bare shoulders and arms, and he could almost perfectly imagine a skilled painter meticulously applying their paint brush to each freckle.

They only had two more mornings left to wake up like this. Only two more mornings to wake to the smell of roses outside their cracked open window and only two more mornings for George to wake to the sound of Dream playing a moody yet fitting Nocturne for him to open his eyes to.

George glanced to the clock beside them, showing that it was just past 11 AM, and back to Dream, who was sound asleep. He noticed that, from Dream's hand splayed over the pillow beside him, he wore no jewelry aside from his silver moon ring. He took off everything, yet slept with this ring. George feels his heart swell as he pays mind to the cool metal of his own ring and how it pressed cold against his chest.

Carefully, he peels Dream's arm off of him from where it was loosely thrown over him, moving slowly to ensure that Dream wouldn't stir and sleepily mumble more than he already was. He sets his feet to the cool wood floor and lets go of the blankets that had once been covering him and picked through the clothes they left strewn on the floor. It was raining, the kind of rain that lingered in every corner of George's mood and all along the house in the dim lighting that called for warm socks and lit candles, the kind of rain that egged George on to stay in bed. It was soft-sounding and peaceful, trickling down the windows and sounding like little pellets of glass falling on pavement. Maybe this was what inspired George to pull on one of Dream's t-shirts from the floor that fitted loose but comfortable, and venture across the room enough to pull out the piano bench and sit. He listens to the familiar creak of the wooden bench as he leans his weight forward just like Dream taught him to. His fingers settle on the smooth cover of the keys and delicately, he presses his thumb onto a key experimentally. His hands were still sluggish as he was a mere beginner at the instrument, but he had come a long way in the past few days with Dream's guidance.

He recognized the note as abnormal from the chord he was trying to capture thanks to his ear, so quickly, he adjusted his thumb to the next note down. Satisfied, he played the rest of the chord, and though it was clunky and not even half as graceful as when Dream played it, it sufficed.

Timidly at first, George opened his mouth to sing as his fingers pressed into single notes at a time, some delayed and far too heavy-sounding, but he was trying his best.

*"The sun is hidden*

*Behind the clouds."*

George looks over to find Dream still asleep and, behind him, the wide window revealing the rain pouring down.

*"The sun goes down*

*I watch it fall."*

With the next verse, he experimented with more full chords instead of the pendulum between one note and another. His voice was a little crackly and quiet as he had just woken up, but he figured the soft nature of the song suited the equally soft atmosphere.

*"I write your name*

*At the grocery store*

*I want to see*

*What it's like to be you."*

In the latter parts of the chorus, George's fingers followed along the melody, and gradually he

moved on to something more difficult than single notes and chords. In the left hand, he had the simple switch between two chords while his right hand ventured to quicker and harder melodies. The song overall was simple and elementary in comparison to the beautiful masterpieces Dream could accomplish, but to George, this was a big step of progress. Especially with new instruments, he had a tendency to play it safe. He would, admittedly, miss a few notes and have to restart a few notes back, but he was playing better than he maybe ever had.

*"I'm laying down*

*It's raining now*

*When things are gone*

*You can't have them back."*

The chords George played were sometimes offbeat or sometimes too harsh, but he didn't mind the imperfection of the music he was creating. He realized that, after all, in order to create good music, he had to create bad music first.

In order to fly, he had to learn to walk.

In order to love, he had to learn to like.

*"I close my eyes*

*It's late at night*

*I hope I won't*

*Have that dream again."*

George was so focused on playing his part on the piano that he didn't hear the bed rustle, didn't hear the pair of feet padding along the floor, and didn't sense the presence behind him until he played the final note of the song, captured in one of the highest keys on the board, and a pair of arms wrapped around him. If anyone else were to do this, to sneak behind George and hug him from behind, he'd startle. Instead, he leaned into the embrace, still seated at the bench, as he felt Dream's bare chest press to his clothed back, and he felt the warmth of arms around his middle.

"That was beautiful," Dream mumbled into George's hair. His voice was low and clearly only now waking up. "I like how you sang it. How you played it."

"I messed up a bunch," George says with a bashful laugh.

"I like how you mess up," Dream mutters. His face drops to bury almost completely into George's neck. "It sounds nice when you do it."

"Well," George says, trying to hide his own flustered demeanor, "thank you, Dream." He swivels himself around on the bench so that he faced his sleepy counterpart, who, as suspected, had half-open eyes and a mess of hair covering them, hardly dressed and appearing to have no intention to do so.

"Are you wearing my shirt?" Dream says, eyes opening a little more.

"Yeah," George says, a little more shyly than he had initially intended. This was new territory, and in his gut, it felt wrong. It felt wrong to wake Dream up with the piano instead of leaving him alone

to wake up in the cold bed. It felt wrong to wear his shirt without second thought. It felt wrong to become so dependent. “Sorry, I can-”

“No,” Dream blurts. “It looks good on you.”

They looked at each other, expressions soft, George still seated and Dream still looming over him.

“What song was that?” Dream inquires.

“‘No, the moon’ by Teen Suicide,” George starts. “Wilbur showed it to me.” George surprised himself by getting along rather well with Wilbur. Despite their few interactions, they were positive; as it turned out, Wilbur always had fantastic music recommendations.

“Come back to bed?” Dream asks as more of a plea than a question. George tilts his head.

“Aw, come on, Dream. I just got you awake.” George stands slowly. “It’s already 11! Wouldn’t you like to go adventuring?”

Dream shoots him a playful look and leans forward enough so that his forehead rested on George’s shoulder. Dream didn’t come across as the clingy type, but in reality, his love language was, without a doubt, touch. Hugs, cuddling- that seemed to be Dream’s favorite thing. It didn’t take much. Just a squeeze to his hand or the bump to his knee and he seemed satisfied. It was endearing, really, which was a lot coming from George who, for so long, saw himself as the opposite. Nowadays, he was starting to question that as he found himself vying for Dream in general.

Dream nips at George’s neck, emitting a meek yet amused laugh, but Dream quietly muttered, “adventure can wait.”

Adventure waited.

---

George and Dream tried their darnedest to soak up their sparse remaining time in France.

They roamed the plant-invested dirt paths on their matching blue bikes, and packed up picnics on red-and-white checker blankets to enjoy their meals in the beautiful rose garden bordering the back side of the cottage. They spent nights either behind the piano or curled up in front of the stone fireplace, once where they FaceTimed Sapnap and other time where they watched more French dramas.

Despite the one minor incident where George’s mom was attempting to get a hold of him, the trip remained light-hearted. Late-night talks were mostly light and easy, and their days were filled with playful laughter and banter. But it seemed that on their final night, the night before they would rise early the next morning and get on a plane to take them back down to normal life, they were equally unwilling to let go of this small world they had created for the two of them.

It was far past an hour that was reasonable, and together they watched as the little alarm clock beside the bed faded from the hours of the night to the earliest parts of the morning, yet neither of them were tired or inclined enough to drift away to sleep.

They laid side-by-side on the cool patio of the outside area on the back of the cottage, a sea of stars high above their heads and the lights from inside bleeding into the darkness of the night around them. Neither of them knew much about constellations, but with the help of Google, they tried to locate a few traces of stars.



A half-empty wine bottle sat wedged between their pressed-together legs, a blanket partially strewn over their bodies as they turned to each other in wonder.

“I don’t know if I’m ready to leave,” George admits. He props his cheek on his hand as his body rotates to the side to face the other.

“Let’s just stay here, then,” Dream says. His voice sounded more pleading than anything. George gives a laugh, and though they both were somewhat kidding, there was a serious sentiment hidden behind their rhetorical words. They jokingly planned it all out— they would rebook their plane tickets for another two weeks back where they would stay here in their sweet secluded cottage a little longer before, if they felt like it, getting on a train back to Paris.

George immersed himself in this scenario as they continued to look up at the stars, the wine they had downed making him tipsy enough to find things a little more funny than usual, but not drunk enough to lose a complete grip on his composure. He feels the bottle slip out from between them and listens to the sound of glass against stone as the wine bottle was set aside, and in a silent understanding George knew that neither he nor Dream planned on wasting the night away with intoxication. He wanted to remember this.

Eventually, Dream gives George a soft look that George had memorized as *hold me* and he did, opening his arms and trying to mentally snapshot the momentary flash of glee across Dream’s face before he invited himself to rest the better part of his upper body on George’s chest. George looked down to watch as Dream fiddled with the chain of his necklace, the ring being fiddled between his fingers in a back-and-forth rhythm. He had a tendency to fiddle. George found it endearing.

“Hey,” George murmurs as he recognizes the droopy look to Dream’s bright eyes, “don’t fall asleep on me. We were going to finish playing that card game you were teaching me, remember?”

Dream nuzzles his face closer, scooting up and up as if he intended to fall asleep here. “M not falling asleep,” he mutters, very clearly falling asleep, “just resting my eyes...” He ended up falling asleep within a few minutes, but George’s eyes remained wide open. He let Dream rest, let Dream tug him close to himself in a kind of protective embrace George never knew he would find such comfort in. Occasionally, he’d move a lock from Dream’s eyes, or when he saw the muscles of his arms twitch likely as an indication he was having one of those bad dreams again, George would rub his back until his body went slack and relaxed.

There was something terrifying about how well George knew Dream. They hadn’t known each other for long enough to justify the bond they had. George felt as if he knew *everything* about Dream yet there was still so much more to discover. He already knew about Dream’s nightmares as one night, about a week after their first kiss, George had accidentally fallen asleep in Dream’s apartment, and Dream hadn’t had the heart to wake him. (Seriously, it was a miracle Sappnap hadn’t discovered them before.)

“*Dream?*” George had said, disoriented, as the room remained dark and dreary with it still being night. He remembered blinking enough to adjust his groggy vision to the dim atmosphere, enough to see where Dream’s back was turned to him. Even in the darkness, George could see the mild tremor to his muscles and the tensing of his posture. “*Hey, are you okay?*”

“*Sorry,*” Dream had said, voice murky and shaky, “*sorry, sorry, I just-*”

George had hushed him, scooted across the bed and, without much hesitation, hugged Dream from behind and pressed his face into his clothed back. “*No need to apologize,*” he’d murmured, “*talk about it when you want, alright?*”

"Yeah," Dream choked out in return. George wasn't sure if he was crying, but looking back, he was sure it was likely. He remembered how he felt like his heart was breaking a little at the quietness of Dream's usually unapologetic tone. How his own mind had belittled him to something diffident and so unlike himself.

"*I have nightmares sometimes,*" Dream said once he had calmed down enough, "*about... well, this.*" In a silent motion, he pointed to the long jagged scar that connected his brow to his lip.

"*The accident?*" George had murmured in reply. Coaxing, but not pressuring.

"Yeah..."

"*Do you want to describe the dream to me? Would that help?*"

"*Maybe. Well, it always starts fine, y'know? Just driving normally, but then before I know it, the car gets closer and closer and-*" George remembered feeling his body tense again at the memory. "*Then there's all these fragments of glass, and whenever I try to call for help nobody-*" Dream gulped, "*nobody comes.*" George remained quiet to let Dream keep talking. "*I know the accident was my fault, really. I shouldn't have gone driving so late when I was clearly not in the right place.*" He paused. "*I should probably explain that to you, huh?*"

"*Only if you want to,*" George assured him.

"*I was.... Really, really pissed at my parents. My dad in particular. He told me that if I was going to 'waste my life-'*" Dream put that bit in quotations, "*I might as well leave. So, I did. I took his car keys and drove off.*" He laughed bitterly, "*of course karma got a hold of me. I was playing my music too loud—I think I was crying but I really don't remember—I was kind of zoned out and so lost in my own head that I didn't see that car come from the right, we both had the right of way but I just didn't stop quick enough and then we-*" Dream freezes. "*There was so much glass, George. I didn't know windshields could break into so many pieces.*"

Despite never being in a car accident, George figured he had an idea of what Dream was talking about.

George didn't know that a heart could break into so many pieces until he faced the ultimatum of what *he* wanted and what his *parents* wanted.

Gently, George had rubbed a hand over Dream's back. "*You're safe now, though.*"

"*I am?*" Dream had whispered.

"*Yes,*" George consoles him. "*I mean, look at you. Your scars have healed. You can- you still drive just fine and, better yet, you're still an amazing musician.*" His hand continues to sweetly rub along his spine, "*I'm so sorry you had to go through that, Dream. Honestly, it- it- it breaks my heart, but look at you.*" George considered himself to usually be exceptionally terrible at comforting people, but in this moment, he was so desperate to convince Dream of his own worth that the words flowed to him. "*You're so strong. Cut yourself some slack!*"

Dream looked over his shoulder, and through the clear pain etched all over his face, he smiled. Softly, weakly. But he smiled. "*Thank you,*" he murmured.

After that night, George assured Dream that he could call him, even if it was the dead of night. So, after a bit of hesitation, Dream obliged. George kept his phone in earshot of his bed, and sometimes when he picked up all he would hear was panicked breathing, he would talk. Even as he was practically falling asleep, he learned that Dream responded best to distraction. If Dream had

something to say, George would listen. But otherwise, he would tell Dream a story from his childhood, or something mundane that had happened to him that day. And, he would bid Dream goodnight once the other end of the phone line went completely quiet. At first, this would happen twice or maybe three times a week. Then, it faded to one. And now that they were on this trip, Dream hardly even twitched or tensed up in his sleep.

And, when they dragged themselves to a proper bed instead of sleeping on the cold patio of the cottage, consequently waking up bright and early the following morning to stuff up their suitcases and catch an early plane back to America, Dream didn't have any bad dreams for the rest of the night.

---

George's room never felt so quiet.

It didn't *have* to be quiet, he reminded himself. Dream had walked him right up to his floor on the apartment building, all the way to his door. For a second, George was about to ask Dream for the keys out of habit, as if this was *their* apartment. But he found his own keys, cold in his front jeans pocket.

"Well," George had said, hand clinging to the backpack strapped over his shoulder. "I guess this is where we part."

George didn't know if he imagined it, but Dream looked sad for a second. Disappointed. "Oh," Dream muttered. "Right."

In that moment, George couldn't read the expression on his face. He realized their feet were settled above the earth of America, an entire ocean away from their safe haven in France.

This was the real world again.

"We can call later," George offered. He suddenly forgets what he's supposed to do with his hands, how far or how close he should be to Dream, or when to excuse himself to unlock his apartment.

"Yeah," Dream says shortly. George's eyes catch on the ring worn proudly on Dream's index finger, the small sun engraving catching in the light of the hallway. George's own necklace was tucked under his shirt. What was he supposed to do? Was he supposed to step forward and kiss him goodbye? Hug him? Why was this so awkward? It never was awkward before. They knew each other so perfectly— what had changed?

They didn't hug. Didn't kiss. Instead, Dream gave him a half-wave and walked down the hallway, slumped and alone. George had a pit in his stomach that didn't go away even as he retreated into his own cold, dark, quiet room.

George considered himself to be someone who enjoyed a quiet atmosphere. He didn't like to stay on calls for too long, didn't like being tied to texting someone for extended amounts of time. He loved being around people, but in turn, he loved being alone.

So why did it feel so *quiet*? Like his room was missing something so important, as if it were stripped bare and empty?

As George busied himself with unpacking his suitcase, sorting through unfolded shirts and crumpled sweatpants he had carelessly shoved in, he discovered that many of these clothes were Dream's.

Without a second thought, he picked up one of these shirts, baggy and emblazoned with the Nirvana logo, and traded it for his own shirt. He hugged the material to himself. It smelled like him. It smelled like home.

“Gogy!” comes an excited voice from the doorway. George whirls around to see no one other than Sapnap, dark hair messy and somewhat tied up with his usual white bandana, arms open which he gladly welcomed himself into.

“Hey, man, how’s it going?” George says casually. Sapnap looks him over.

“Who cares how it’s going?! I wanna hear about France!”

Over hot chocolate, George told Sapnap all about France in turn for Sapnap to fill him in on all of the shenanigans he had missed: apparently, Quackity got really drunk and nearly lit his couch on fire while Karl climbed up a tree so high that they had to call the fire department and get him down as if he were a house cat.

But the whole time, George’s mind wandered to the things he couldn’t say aloud; the thoughts about Dream, Dream, Dream. About how he could read George like a book, backwards and forwards. How he knew just how to kiss him, just when to pull his hair or bite his lip or pick him up and spin him around.

Where was *that* Dream in the hallway an hour ago?

Had George lost him?

George didn’t call Dream that night.

His ring necklace still remained tucked under his— no, Dream’s— shirt, hidden from the world.

His bed felt so cold when he fell asleep that night.

---

It wasn’t until four full days of awkward calls and ‘sorry, I’m busy’s that George saw Dream in person again.

Dream messaged George asking if he would like to practice just the two of them, and he obliged. Why not?

So, they met at the usual practice room, after their afternoon classes on Wednesday. Despite the afternoon hour, George arrived with coffee cups in each hand. The same orders they got from their French cafes.

“Hey,” Dream said. He was already waiting behind the drum set, dressed casually in a green hoodie and black ripped jeans.

“Hi,” George says back. The air felt thick with tension as George took a seat on his usual stool, busying himself with unzipping his guitar from its case and plugging it in to the nearest amp. He could feel Dream’s eyes trained on him.

The two got along just fine, talking on surface-level topics and making small chitchat between songs, running over tunes as they felt like and catching up with the material their bands had completed with their absence.

It wasn't until the end, when George threw away his empty coffee cup and slung his bag over his shoulder, that things got interesting.

He was on his way to leaving the practice room, without a kiss or a hug or really anything, when Dream caught his arm.

"Wait," Dream said. When George looked back, arm caught in Dream's firm yet steady grasp, he saw the boy— no, the man— that he fell in love with back in Paris.

Wait, shit. Fell in *love* with?

"Yes?" George whispers. No, he wasn't in love with Dream. Yes he was. Was he in love with Dream?! Oh, God, he would return to that thought process later.

"I... wanted to ask you something." Dream lets go of him, but George stays. He watches as Dream fiddles with his ring, twisting it slightly left then right along the circumference of his finger. George raises his brows as if to say *go on*. "Do you want to maybe... well..." Dream clears his throat. He seemed nervous. Dream never seemed nervous. "I know we agreed to keep things quiet and kind of on the down-low, but after the trip I sorta..." He rubs the back of his neck. "I don't know if you felt like this, but I was feeling like it was a test run of if we were- well, not a secret. And." Dream's eyes stare dead into his. "I liked it."

*I liked it too*, George wanted to say. *I loved it*.

His throat felt tight. George lifted his hand to find that it was shaking. Why was it shaking? George wished Dream didn't notice, but he did. He knew him too well. "Are you—"

"I don't know," George cuts him off. He shoves his hands in his pockets and looks away once he catches a glimpse of the hurt in Dream's eyes.

"What?" Dream says.

"I don't know if I- if that's what we should do." *No, this is what we should do*, George's mind was screaming. *We should be more than friends-with-benefits. We should be boyfriends, for fuck's sake!*

"Oh," Dream says.

They were silent.

"I guess I misread this, then," Dream adds. George looks up to meet his eyes. He scoffs.

"Misread? I think you made some big assumptions," George finds himself saying.

"Assumptions?" Dream echoes. His brow was furrowing like it did when he was frustrated over something. Usually, when he did that, it was over something simple, like having trouble unscrewing a cap from a bottle. Not from being frustrated over *George*. "What, are you saying you didn't feel anything? Or at least, anything new?"

George gulps.

In this moment, he thought he was being logical. That he simply needed time.

He was wrong.

He was just scared of himself. He was scared that he needed Dream so badly.

*Are you saying you didn't feel anything?*

George felt too *much*. He felt his heart squeeze tight in his chest unlike it ever had before when Dream laughed. He felt like they were the only two alive at times, like the only thing that mattered was them. Just like their first night in Normandy, where no one was awake but George, Dream, the moon, and the bats that made little squeaking noises that were audible through the cracked-open window beside the bed.

George's throat goes dry as Dream looks at him.

"Oh, alright," Dream says. "I see how it is."

*No, that's not what I meant, George thinks. I felt everything for you, Dream. I feel everything for you.*

"Dream," George says.

When Dream turns around, George can't recognize him. He felt just like the day they had met, two strangers, two musicians whose worlds collided unwillingly. He felt as if Dream might as well where his mask and hood once again, because he couldn't decrypt a single expression on his face.

"What, George?" Dream says. "If you're going to tell me that you don't want me like that, don't fucking- don't fucking bother, I can already tell that much."

George hated the frustration bubbling in his own chest. "You can't get mad at me for not being ready for this!" he bursts.

"Is that what you're saying?" Dream counters. He whirls on him, hands flexed out, eyes wide and lips pressed tight in a line. "Is that what you meant when you- when you- didn't call me? When you acted like I was fucking invisible at our last band practice?" George opens his mouth, then shuts it. "We're not strangers, George. You know that."

"I'm not saying we're strangers," George says slowly.

"Then what are we?" Dream remarks.

That was a great question.

"I- I don't know," George whispers.

Dream's face softens for just a second, and in this moment, George could recognize him. "If all you need is time, George, I'll wait. That's totally fine. We can figure this out together, we can wait until you're comfortable. But... I don't think that's the problem here." His voice turns pleading, "please, just- just tell me that's all you need. Tell me that time is all you need."

George remains silent.

He didn't need time. They both knew that. Time wasn't the problem.

Dream's face hardens again, like a door slamming in his face. "What are you so scared of?" Dream says. He was trying, so hard, to get through to George. To extend a hand for George to take.

"I'm not scared," George snaps. "It's just- what if this isn't what I want?"

"What?" Dream replies. But his voice wasn't so soft anymore.

“What if I don’t *want* to be more?” George couldn’t recognize himself. Why couldn’t this stop? Why couldn’t they just go back to how it was?

“Well than what *would* you want, huh?” Dream’s eyes looked dark. It seemed like he was shutting down, and his self-defense mechanisms were kicking in. “To go off and pretend that you’re straight while you have some *guy* to fuck you? Is that what you want, George?”

*That* was a low blow. George’s face flushes. “You are such an asshole,” he grits through clenched teeth. “I mean, seriously, Dream. Don’t flatter yourself.”

“Oh, but you won’t deny it!” Dream’s voice raises. “Just own up to it. Tell me that all I’m good for is- is a guy to hold down a drum beat! Tell me that all you *want* from me is sex, George.”

Something in George broke at that. “I won’t tell you anything!” George shouts. “This is over, Dream. Whatever the fuck we are? I’m done.”

George didn’t look back as he slammed the door to the practice room, didn’t hear Dream as he shouted back his final thoughts so he could get the last word in. He walked all the way back to his apartment as Dream had driven him here and he didn’t want to make Sapnap leave his class early to pick him up. His feet were aching and sore by the time he turned up to the front door of his apartment, but his heart hurt more.

Why did he do that?

He wanted to be mad at Dream. He wanted to hate him for the things he said. But what had he said, really? The Dream he knew was gentle and kind, a sweet soul made of glass.

But George had resorted him to something broken, and something hurt.

George wanted to be Dream’s boyfriend. He wanted to hold his hand for everyone to see, wanted to kiss him goodnight every night and wake up next to him.

But he was scared.

He couldn’t admit it to himself, but he was scared. Of what his parents would think, of what his friends would think.

On top of that, he was scared of letting someone in without the mask of *we’re just friends*. Deep down, they both knew that wasn’t true, but when it was official, there was no corner to hide in. No shade to shield away the sun.

George was scared.

He barely shut the apartment door behind him before he crumpled to the floor, guitar falling with an ugly dissonance of ringing strings. He pressed the heels of his hands to his closed lids and cried, sobbed harder than he maybe ever had.

He thought he might melt away through the cracks of the floorboards as his entire body weeped with him.

George really thought he understood what Dream meant by a shattering windshield before, but now, he truly did.

George never knew a heart could shatter into so many pieces.

## Chapter End Notes

aha, pogchamp

let's be mutuals on twitter! @jungkooksfic (I'm the one with the Howl pfp)

I'll leave my link here! <3

(also sorry about that chapter heehee)

<https://twitter.com/jungkooksfic>



# Liebestraum

## Chapter Notes

this is a snippet of a chapter tbh  
the next chapter will also be short :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

### *Sapnap*

Life was pretty good in Sapnap's eyes.

He had most everything he could ask for: a supportive, big family awaiting him at home, a best friend as his roommate, and an overall excited attitude towards life. He had all kinds of things to look forward to each day— aspects as small as Minecraft tournaments amongst his friends or as big as weekly performances that lead to tours in San Diego.

But Sapnap was also the type who absorbed energy. He was happy when the atmosphere was buzzing with high energy. He felt somber when the air was quiet and sadder. Sapnap felt as if when his friends were in pain, he felt their pain, too. Seeing them hurt ached more than any physical wound.

So, when Sapnap stepped out of his room to grab himself a coffee and see if George and the rest of the group wanted to do homework in the outdoor quad on campus, one could imagine the shock he experienced when he found George crumbled on the floor in the entryway.

"Hey, hey," Sapnap said, listening to the dissonant clang of George's dropped guitar and rushing over to his friend. He couldn't tell if George could hear him as he was shaking all over, sobbing so hard that Sapnap could almost feel how raw his throat must be. "Easy, George. Easy." He slowly sank to the floor in front of his friend and took both of his wrists in his hands. "Take some breaths, alright? Breathe with me, dude. You're fine."

Despite how level and steady his voice was, Sapnap was internally freaking out. George never dared to break down in front of him. In fact, before that night in San Diego, he had never seen him cry. He tried to hold on to George's wrists, to ground him, to keep him here, but he felt as if George was shrinking and slipping away, falling further and further into the claws of his own dangerous mind.

Slowly, George's mood seemed to steady as the tremble in his hands faded away and the suppressed sobs dimmed away into heavy, forced breaths.

"Yeah, that's it," Sapnap coaxes. He really didn't know what he was doing, but it seemed like it was working. "There you go. Now come on, man, let's get you off the floor." With some effort, Sapnap stood, and brought George up with him. Even now that George was standing, he still looked like he'd fallen apart; like a crumbled piece of paper that was flattened out. The lines of grief were still clear. Sapnap decided not to ask questions just yet as he knew George hated talking about this stuff almost as much as he hated crying, and instead he silently lead George over to the stool that pulled up to their short kitchen counter, sat him down, and bustled about the kitchen to make them both some tea.

“Sap,” George starts. His voice was hoarse and broken. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to break down like this...” He leans his elbows against the counter and presses the heels of his hands to his closed, red-rimmed eyes. “I just, I fucked up. I really fucked up.”

Sapnap pushes a mug in front of him and leans his weight onto the counter. “Hey.” George lifts his head enough from his hands to meet his friend’s gaze. “Don’t apologize, George. Just tell me what’s going on.” Sapnap points a finger at him accusingly to silence him, “and *don’t* say it’s fine, because dude, we both know that’s not true.” He takes a long sip of his tea. “Now tell me. Lay it all on me.”

George did.

He told him, first, about how happy he and Dream were in Paris. Sapnap didn’t need to be told this much. He could see it through Dream’s texts, in their eyes when they FaceTimed, and in George’s face when he arrived home, empty-handed, without Dream to hold on to.

Then, George told him about their solo band practice. How everything was fine, awkward, but *fine*, until Dream asked if they could be exclusive.

*You weren’t already exclusive?* Sapnap wanted to ask. He bit his tongue.

“I froze,” George recounts. He stares pensively into the small pool of his tea. “I don’t know what was wrong with me. I didn’t want- to- to *hurt* him like that, and I know I did. But *why*? Why did I do that?” His grip tightens on the mug. “I’ve never felt so safe around someone. And- I’m sure you know this better than anybody, that I can’t really talk about anything serious without feeling this sort of guilt, but I didn’t feel that with him. So why, Sap? Why did I let myself lose him?”

Sapnap’s gaze softened, for he knew the sentence that George was thinking: *Why did I let myself lose the best thing I’ve ever had?*

“You didn’t,” Sapnap says. “You fucked up, I won’t lie to you. But you didn’t lose him.” He watches as George uneasily runs a hand through his unkempt hair. “George, brother, I love you, but come on. You gotta realize something.” Sapnap waits for him to meet his eyes. “I think you’re scared of losing him. And I think you’re so scared that you’re willing to let go before he does.” He would have to harp on George later for thanking him for such god tier advice, but for now, he would remain serious, because really, it physically hurt to see him like this. He wanted George to have this, to have Dream, because from the moment he saw them together, he knew they were perfect for each other.

Sapnap remembered when he walked in on them that one time in the kitchen, and it was so damn *awkward* but so endearing at the same time. How, despite being caught red-handed, the two looked excited and giddy, and just the moment before, they stared at each other as if they were the only two in the world. Despite the sadness Sapnap picked up from George’s guilt and self-loathing in this moment, he wasn’t worried about George’s future with Dream, so long as George did some damage control and figured himself out.

*I think he loves him*, Sapnap ponders. *I don’t think he’s really loved someone like this before, and he’s flying blind. It scares him. In pursuing Dream, he’s admitting to himself that he loves him.*

“You’re right,” George says placidly. “I am scared.” He pauses. It must be his first time saying this aloud. “Sapnap, I don’t think I’ve ever been able to be so much of myself with someone before. And- my instincts tell me to go back to knowing him from afar.” He runs his hands through his hair, “because it’s easier, y’know? It’s easier when I don’t have to...” he snuffles and fidgets with the necklace looped around his neck. Sapnap had never seen that necklace before... “When I don’t have to be so open. So... real.”

After that conversation, Sapnap and George finished their tea together before George excused himself to his room. For the remainder of Wednesday evening, Thursday, and Friday, Sapnap hardly saw much of George; according to Quackity, who had a few overlapping classes, George would show up to class and go straight home to finish his work and sleep. The three grew weary of their non-present guitarist. George slept through the weekly band rehearsal on Friday. Missed their Thursday Night Minecraft Tournament. But every time Sapnap would check up on George, he would find him tucked in bed with his eyes closed, sometimes dressed in a shirt Sapnap didn't recognize. Due to the either dark or green color and how baggy it was, he figured it was Dream's.

It wasn't until Saturday, mid afternoon, that this situation became even more clear to Sapnap. He knocked twice on the sturdy, black-painted apartment door of Dream's home before he twisted his key in the lock and let himself in. An hour or two before, Sapnap asked if he could stop over for some tips for their how in the evening, and while this was true, he wanted to check up on Dream, too. Beside a few vcs and passings on campus, he hadn't asked Dream how he was feeling at all. He figured it was better to serve as a distraction.

But as soon as he let himself in, he was met with music before he could gaze at the dirty dishes in the sink or the unfolded hoodies draped over the carpet of the living room. The sound was coming from the ajar door that lead to what he knew as Dream's room, and it was all intense and all genius at the same time.

Sapnap lead himself in further, letting the door slip shut behind him as he lingered around the doorway of Dream's room. He wanted to call out to him and wake him up from his trance, but he couldn't. Dream was seated on the bench behind his upright piano, fingers dancing up and down the keys as if the keys were red-hot. He still managed to seem graceful, edging his hands up further with the dip of his elbow, elegantly leaning forward to capture the most raw and loud sounds of the keys.

Usually, Sapnap found the songs of classical composers tedious and boring. But when Dream played the piano, he made it sound like the most interesting music in the world— even more lively than the most metal of rock, even more soft than the sweetest violin melodies.

(He was gonna smack George's mom across the head for traumatizing her son enough to let this guy go. Seriously, he blamed her.)

When Dream resurfaced, lifting his hands as if they were puppets on strings and slouching in posture, his eyes drifted over to Sapnap. As Sapnap looked at him, it seemed that Dream already knew of Sapnap's awareness of the situation. Dream's eyeliner, or what was left of it, was smudged around his eyes, lines of tears clear down his cheeks. His hair was messy, unbrushed, eyes all puffy. He looked like the embodiment of a rough breakup, yet somehow, he made it look good.

"Hey," Dream says, standing from the bench and tucked in the seat where it belonged. He shoved his hands into his front pockets, briefly brushing his thumbs under his eyes to wipe away the half-dried remnants of tears and unintentionally smudged eyeliner, before he met Sapnap's gaze confidently.

"Holy shit, man," Sapnap marvels. "I knew you were good, but I didn't know you were *that* good. What the fuck was that song?!"

"'Liebestraum' by Franz Liszt," Dream says shortly. "I would've played Chopin, but I already played all of the Nocturnes I know for George last week." He gives a sad, hallow laugh. "Who knew I still remembered them all?"

Sapnap's eyes wandered to a ring on Dream's index finger. He didn't think much of it at first, just that it looked cool. That was, until, he saw the sun engraving.

Immediately, he made the connection to the matching moon George bore around his neck.

Sapnap realized something in this moment.

Dream and George were equally broken in need of repair. They were like broken pieces of glass, held in either of Sapnap's hands. But little did they know, they fit together. Their jagged ends would meet to form a whole.

"That was really, really sick," Sapnap says, and casual lingo aside, his tone was sincere.

"Thanks." Dream motions to the drum set on the other end of his apartment. He didn't seem disoriented at all that Sapnap saw him crying.

Sapnap's eyes settled on the suitcase in the center of Dream's bedroom floor. It was still zipped up, and in amusement, he figured Dream must've set aside his unpacking from all those days ago. "Still haven't unpacked from France, huh?"

Dream tilts his head. "No, I have." He looks over to the suitcase. "That's for my trip to Florida."

Sapnap's jaw nearly drops to the floor. "Your trip to- dude, what?! It's the middle of the semester, though." Based on their bits and pieces of conversation about their pasts, Sapnap gathered that Dream was, in fact, from Florida. Sapnap also gathered that Dream had not-the-best parents that were, remarkably, very parallel to George's. "Why?"

Dream shrugs. "My mom got a hold of me again, somehow." He twirls his drumsticks between his fingers. "She heard about how we were in San Diego, and because I wasn't wearing my mask and all that, she knew it was me for sure. She called me through Drista's phone, told me I should come home. That I've already done what I needed to do. That I should come back." He sighs. "I think she's right, Sapnap." His eyes flicker upwards. "I've already performed for thousands of people. I've already met so many amazing people through music. What if it's time to put that away? What if she's right? That I need to- to- pursue something else?"

Sapnap's jaw was slack with complete shock. Dream, of all people, was giving up? Maybe Sapnap didn't know Dream as well as George did, but he had a good understanding of what kind of guy he was; driven, motivated, and talented. So what in all of *hell* was this?

Sapnap exhales slowly.

Since when did he become a fucking therapist?

"Dream," Sapnap starts. "Look, man. I'm not going to stand in your way. But we all need you. Your *band* needs you. You're the leader, for fuck's sake! And you have to be the best drummer I've ever seen, and on top of that, the best pianist. Seriously, dude. You have some serious talent going for you."

"It's not going anywhere," Dream insists. "I just- I don't know. Maybe it's time to give up on this pipe dream."

Sapnap grits his teeth. He really didn't know the right words to say, simply because he didn't know Dream so well. He wouldn't go down without a fight, but he knew this battle would be pointless. Dream had made up his mind.

Sapnap and Dream both knew there was only one person who could talk Dream out of this.

So, while Dream had his back turned as he set up his drum kit, Sapnap sent three text messages in a final desperation.

**Sapnap:**

George I know this is hard but Dream said he's going back to Florida

He needs you, man

You need to get your fucking shit together and apologize

Rain pelted away at the windows in a sudden motion. Clouds settled over the horizon and blocked out most of the night, leaving the room cold, and dark. The rain, somehow, wasn't comforting as it tended to be. It felt angry, like Mother Nature was grabbing fist-fulls of water and pelting them at the windows.

Even as Dream taught Sapnap a few tricks on the drums, Sapnap couldn't get the melody of Liebestraum out of his head. The sad, melancholy collection of notes connected by elegant arcs of the wrist, and all of the stories they told.

Later, once Sapnap would go home to an empty apartment empty of George, a few text messages as explanation, he made a single google search.

He learned that "liebestraum" meant "love dream" in German.

He learned that when Dream practically pried himself away from the song, as if bidding it goodbye, he was, in a way, saying goodbye to the love story he considered as nothing more than a short-lived fantasy.

But Sapnap knew better.

He knew George. He could fall apart sometimes, because he was human. But George was a fighter. He wouldn't let go.

Sapnap looked to see George's bedroom ajar, bed unmade but empty, his usual shoes by the door gone.

He smiled to himself.

George was a fighter alright.

He wouldn't let Dream wake from this *liebestraum*.

## Chapter End Notes

this chapter makes me think of "ghosting" by mother mother  
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# Something

## Chapter Summary

"I can make it rain on you."

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

***George***

**Sapnap:**

George I know this is hard but Dream said he's going back to Florida

He needs you, man

You need to get your fucking shit together and apologize

George had never flown up from his bed so quickly.

**George:**

WHAT

Why?!

*He needs you.*

The words attacked George's thoughts relentlessly as he forced himself to untangle his body from the blankets and sheets of his bed, to pull on a shirt and sweats and somehow dig out his keys from their bowl on the dresser in lightning speed. All the while, George watched his phone for an explanation, but it seemed Sapnap was preoccupied.

**Sapnap:**

His parents

Dude he's going to quit music

*Quit?*

George didn't look for any further explanation, because he didn't need it. Instead, he shoved his feet into untied sneakers and slammed the front door shut behind him.

The last few days had been a blur. George's memory felt fuzzy from the moment he collapsed on the hard wood floor of the apartment. His mind seemed to push away the restless nights spent

watching the sun rise through the dim reflections of his blinds, the days where he laid there too tired to cry. Was this a breakup? Was he even aloud to call this that?

George spent more times than he would admit staring down at his phone, at Dream's contact where the photo was a candid shot from San Diego, where Dream had his knee propped on the dashboard of his pickup and his hand balancing the coffee they had finessed from the poor unsuspecting cashier. The sun was barely risen in the photo, casting a glow onto Dream.

George would miss that pickup. The other day, he let Sapnap, Karl, and Quackity drag him out of bed and take him to get food across campus, and when he sat in the passenger's side of Sapnap's car, he felt weak enough to nearly burst into tears, because the windshield didn't have the faintest, most missable crack on the bottom right from this rogue pebble that flew and hit the car on the freeway, and it didn't have the dangling Hamsa from his rearview mirror.

"*What's this?*" George had asked during one of their habitual late night drives. That must've been a month ago at this point. He poked the blue-stitched dangling Hamsa and watched as it bobbed back and forth with the movements of the car.

"*It's a Hamsa,*" Dream had answered. He moved his hand from where it had been resting on George's thigh and motioned as he talked. "*Drista gave it to me. She's into spiritual shit and all that, and I think she said it protects you from evil or something.*"

Sapnap's car had no Hamsa.

So why? Why was he leaving?

George hopped down the stairs two at a time, apologizing as he brushed past the people leisurely walking up the stairwell. The sounds of his loud feet echoed on the blank walls as he felt as if he were embarking on a race against time. He knew the stairs were faster than the elevator because of that one time he and Dream had raced. The first trial of this race had George in the elevator and Dream on the stairs, but, adamant that the results were "rigged," George took on the stairs the second time and, surely enough, won.

He remembered how when they raced down the stairs together this one time, Dream's laughs echoed loud and unapologetic off the walls, and how George would throw a look over his shoulder to just *see* how his face did that tell-tale scrunch when he wheezed. George ended up looking over his shoulder too long, trying to take it all in, and falling the length of three or four stairs. It was quite the tumble, enough for George to feel the true impact of concrete and gravity and stare at the pavement for a good while before Dream immediately bounded over to him, scooped him up, and fussed over him far more than necessary.

Now, there was no laughter bouncing off the walls.

Only the sounds of racing feet.

When George burst open the heavy metal door of the ground floor to the stairwell, he smelled the rain before he saw it. But really, he *felt* the rain before he saw it.

He felt as the cold sunk its teeth into the bare skin of his forearms and through the fabric of his sweats. He glanced at the time. Sapnap told him that Dream was leaving ten minutes ago. He had no time to find another option.

So, George hastily unchained his light blue bike from its post, tugged it free, practically flew onto it and peddled faster than he had in his life.

He felt the muscles of his quads and calves burn and beg for him to slow down, but he couldn't. He couldn't, because even as he felt his tires hydroplane along the water-slick pavement, he couldn't bring himself to bring mercy to his own pumping legs. George didn't hardly flinch as, all at once, the rain fell onto him with too much weight for him to carry, but he carried it anyway. He felt as the rain drops slipped down his face like infinite tears, how the water suctioned his shirt to his skin and his sweats to his thighs. It was pouring, harder than George had ever seen it rain in this area.

He biked past people with umbrellas and raincoats, some chattering and some alone.

*"There are two kinds of people in this world,"* Dream had uttered one night. It was rainy, a few weeks back. The kind of rain that was light and yielding to blossoming flowers and flourishing grass. *"The people who change lyrics when they sing them, and the people who don't."*

*"What do you mean 'change' the lyrics?"* George said.

George grits his teeth. He forces his feet to propel faster into the peddles, threatening to break the thin arm connecting the peddle to the rest of the bike. He didn't care.

*"Like, with this song."* They were supposed to be studying this night, yet George found Dream's apartment too fascinating to be truly productive. This had been one of the first times George had fully explored Dream's home from the impressive vinyl collection to the homey decorations around the place. Their notes lay forgotten and spilled on the floor as they elected to listen to the rain instead. The fairy lights they had put up together lit up the whole, dark room in a mystical glow. George laid with his head on Dream's chest, his arms wrapped tight around his sides.

The rain provided a background for The Beatles record that was playing, and specifically, the track "Something."

*"Something in the way he moves*

*Attracts me like no other lover."*

George remembered how he nuzzled his head further into the crook between Dream's neck and shoulder. He inhaled the smell of rain and comfort as he felt a hand press comfortably on his back and the other in his hair. Dream's neck vibrated against the side of his head.

*"Something in the way he woos me,*

*I don't want to leave him now*

*You know I believe and how."*

George Harrison had a nice voice. But Dream's was much better, George thought.

*"Like that,"* Dream had said. George hummed incomprehensibly into his neck.

*"Keep singing,"* George had muttered. Dream laughed at him, poked his side and called him a simp, but did it anyway.

The world had been so kind to them then.

The rain fell so sweet and so soft.

But now, the world was all wrong.

George throws his bike down next to the entrance to Dream's apartment complex, not bothering to



properly lock it as he let himself into the building. Immediately, he fiddled with his keys, getting the particular tarnished key in line and ready to go as he raced up the stairs with such speed he nearly tripped.

He couldn't lose Dream.

He could lose anyone, anything but Dream.

Why did he have to realize that when he was about to leave?

In a rush, George shoves his key into the lock and jiggles it back and forth until the door clicked open.

The second the door swung open, George already knew he was too late.

The lights were off, and Dream always liked to have a few lamps turned on when it was dreary like this. The bedroom door stood ajar, and Dream either liked to have his door completely opened or completely shut.

But most of all, it *felt* empty. Hardly anything was gone, but it felt so cold, so *wrong*.

It takes all of George's remaining strength not to melt and crumble to the floor along with the puddle of water gathering at his feet. He could feel himself shivering all over, could already feel the congestion coming on.

"He's gone," said a voice beside him. George whirls around to see Wilbur. "Geez, mate, why are you all wet?"

"He's gone?" George echoes, voice hoarse. His grip tightens on the keys, hard enough that the jagged edges leave imprints in the flesh of his thumb.

"Yeah," Wilbur says slowly. His brows disappear behind his hair. "Did he not tell you?"

George sighs. "It's really complicated." Complicated was the tip of the ice berg. "Did he leave for the airport already? Is he- is he okay? Have you seen him at all?" George panicked as he realized he hadn't so much as texted Dream since the fight happened. Dream had blocked him on Discord, and George took the hint. But he had no idea what he was thinking. How he was feeling.

"Yeah, he's, well... he's okay," Wilbur admits. "Kind of. Are you alright? You look as if you're about to pass out."

George bites his lip. He was trying to think. There was always a solution to things, he was sure. He just had to find the right angle. The airport was a far trek by bike, but by car it was easier. Still, if Dream was already *gone*, there was no catching him.

"Just, how long ago did he leave?" George begs. His hands try to occupy his panicking mind with fiddling with the edge of his shirt and his necklace. "Was it long?"

"Maybe twenty minutes," Wilbur admits, shrugging. "He told me to watch Patches while he's gone, so I thought I would stop by and say hello to her before heading over to the SMP for- well, *your* performance."

George bites his lip. He slept through the better part of the week. He knew well that he wasn't in any shape to perform.

“I need to talk to him,” George pleads. “I- I need to get to the airport or something. I can’t let him *do* this, he just- he’s so fucking stubborn. Why is he so stubborn?” George runs a hand through his soaked hair. “Why is he so- why is he so sure of himself, so confident until now? Why is he giving up *now*? Why did he know me so well?” George’s grip tightens painfully on the ring dangling around his neck. “I, I broke my promise.” He grips the ring harder and harder, as if wanting it to break. George wanted it to break, somehow. He felt like he didn’t deserve it. “I bought this ring because I thought I would be fucking- fucking- *ready* but instead I left him. I left him!” He throws his hands up. “I left him for dead and now he’s- now he’s gone.”

Wilbur visibly gulps.

“Listen, man,” Wilbur says. “I am honestly really, really confused right now, and as much as I love your poetic monologue, I don’t think it’s necessary.” George tilts his head. “I know where to find him. I’m sure he hasn’t left for the airport just yet.”

George trailed after Wilbur without further word. He bucked himself into the passenger’s side of his car, eyes glazed over as he tried, time and time again, to text Dream’s number. He grew accustomed to the red exclamation point and the following text of *message not delivered*, but some childish part of him hoped that somehow these pleas would get through to him.

“It’s going to be okay,” Wilbur assured him as he stepped on the gas far more than the speed limit called for. Rain hit the windshield quicker than the wipers could move away. “He wouldn’t leave without saying goodbye, I’m sure. Dream might act tough sometimes but he’ll never leave without a goodbye.”

*I fucked up though*, George thinks to himself as he types away. *I fucked up. I don’t deserve a goodbye.*

**George:**

I know you won’t get these

But I wanted to tell you something

*Message Not Delivered.*

You can’t leave. You’ve accomplished too much to just turn around now

I know you don’t really want to leave, that’s not who you are

You don’t give up

*Message Not Delivered.*

Why are you giving up

*Message Not Delivered.*

Dream please

*Message Not Delivered.*

I know I fucked up and I know I don’t deserve you but please don’t go

You can hate me, it’s fine, just don’t do this

Stay

Please

George wished life were as simple as nights spent in each others arms singing The Beatles to each other and listening to the sound of the falling rain.

He wished Dream would stay.

“Alright,” Wilbur said, pulling his car to a stop. “He’s probably in there.”

George gulps and looks at the scenery awaiting him outside of the car door. Was he seriously going to do this?

Well, this plan- it was all he had.

“Don’t let him go, George,” Wilbur murmurs.

“I’ll try not to,” George breathes.

#### Chapter End Notes

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I wonder where Dream could possibly be

# Sparks

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

### *Dream*

Dream decided that it would be better to be lost in a crowd than lost in his own mind.

His eyes felt tired as they scanned over the familiar surroundings of the SMP. Dream could practically feel the dark circles under his eyes that he earned from sleepless night after sleepless night, trying to find anything to distract his mind from the memories he couldn't outrun. He tried plugging earbuds in and blasting the music loud enough that his ears hurt and any thoughts drowned in the loud sounds of his playlists. But, as soon as he would take out his earbuds and open his eyes, Dream would look at his own room and see all the places George had been.

That was the problem about being so entwined in someone's life; they're everywhere when you're trying to let go.

Dream was snapped back to life when he felt the crowd's energy rise once the lights of the stage turned off and back on. In this moment, Dream felt insignificant, like nothing more than a face in a crowd of fans. He looked up to see the stage, like a pedestal high above, illuminated with three quarters of The Feral Boys. Dream feels his heart sink with disappointment. George was nowhere to be seen.

If Sappnap's pained expression when Dream asked about George's whereabouts was anything to go off of, Dream was sure George wasn't doing so great. Even after their fight days ago, Dream wanted to hate George. He wanted to shake his fists at him for breaking his heart and wanted to take every last memory and throw it away to burn. But he couldn't. He couldn't, at least, not as long as he remembered how his eyes looked gold in the morning sunlight and how, despite constant denial, he gave the best hugs. Better yet, Dream found it impossible to be mad at George when it seemed like George was the only person who knew Dream through and through.

It was cruel of the universe for the chain of events to play out like this. Really, it was ironic that after Dream separated himself from maybe the only person who really understood him, he found himself in a situation where he needed George most.

So, here Dream was, a being in a crowd cheering for the band standing on the stage, and despite their light-blinded smiles, he could feel the emptiness from where he stood in the sea of people. He could see how Sappnap glanced absently to the empty patch of stage where George usually resided with his black Fender guitar.

Dream sighed. He came to the SMP as some kind of informal farewell to George, because he figured the best closure he could get was visiting the place they had first met. Dream, convinced that George hated him, was sure he had to find some way to move on; some way to shove away all the memories and hopes and dreams and things he had never told anyone but George.

He scoffs as the lights switch to a dimmer blue, signaling that the song was about to start. He felt like a fool for even imagining a future where once, just once, he could get what he wanted.

All he wanted was George.

But it was time to give up on these futile fairytales where George would somehow be comfortable

with the prospect of himself loving another man. Dream was so sick of crying. So sick of pining over people who didn't want him back.

Tugging at his hood, Dream blocked out the whispers of the crowd, of people wondering where the star guitarist. *He's gone*, Dream wanted to scream at them. *I lost him*.

He was ready to tug the car keys from his front pocket and get out of here, but the moment he turned around, he heard the sound of racing feet, the squeal of the microphone, and heavy panting before a voice that he had memorized sounded over the speakers.

"Hi," it says, and in an instant, Dream whirls around. Insanely enough, there was George on the stage, body drooping with exhaustion and chest heaving with labored breaths. Had he run here? Dream's eyes glance over George's form to find him soaking wet. Had he run through the *rain*?

Dream's jaw nearly drops to the floor as George, still trying to catch his breath, didn't crumble under the weight of every pair of confused eyes being trained on him.

"Sorry guys," George says, "I'm so sorry, but I'm going to have to take the stage from you for just one song, then I promise I'll leave you be." George tilts the microphone down and turns on his baffled bandmates who clearly had no warning for this stunt. "Quackity, could I borrow that?"

Dumbfounded, Quackity handed over the guitar George motioned to. It was acoustic, a sweet shade of smooth wood that George expertly slung around his shoulder and adjusted to his liking. Even though the better part of his face was washed out and blank under the brightness of the spotlight, Dream swore he could see the color of his eyes from here.

Dream's eyes flickered down to see something shimmering and glittering on George's chest.

It was his silver ring and its necklace that looped around his neck.

"So," George says nervously, leaning into the microphone. "I have to sing this song for somebody because, well. I'm a dumbass and I let him go..." George's eyes search the crowd, voice dying in his throat as his hands gripped tight onto the microphone. "But he's leaving for Florida to quit music and-" He takes a breath, "I can't let him. Not without a fight, at least. So if he's in that crowd, if *you're* in that crowd, please just... listen." George visibly gulps. "Remember when I was piss drunk and you- you drove me around even though it was super late and I know for a fact you had to get up early the next day? And- we drove on that bridge over the river and there was that one song we both liked but didn't know..."

Of course Dream remembered. He remembered how George looked beautiful even when he was wasted and half asleep.

"Well, I found it. I found the song. I know you said you're not a fan of big gestures, but please, don't- don't do this to yourself. I get it if you don't want to deal with me anymore, but just..." George sighs into the microphone. Was it a trick of the lighting, or were his eyes glittering with unspilled tears? "Don't go."

Despite the audience's clear confusion, someone from the front row gave a supportive whoop before George pressed his fingers into the frets of the acoustic guitar, and with the gentle strumming from his right hand, Dream felt as if he were teleported to that night.

George expertly strummed away the soft, quiet chords, capturing the notes of the melody and leaning close to his microphone before he sang. Dream would never find anyone who sang as well as George, he was sure of it.

*“Did I drive you away?”*

*I know what you’ll say*

*You say, ‘oh, sing one you know.’”*

The whole crowd seemed to hold their breath as Dream was sure he had never heard George sing so beautifully before. His voice floated over the heads of everyone else here, and landed in Dream’s hands. Dream couldn’t hardly blink his eyes away from George, mesmerized, and despite his visible shivering, he looked like an angel.

*“But I promise you this*

*I’ll always look out for you*

*Yeah that’s what I’ll do.”*

Dream remembered that time in San Diego when they were singing together in front of thousands of people and George grabbed his hand and held it. Dream remembered how later that night, they held each other, oblivious to their own budding feelings.

*“My heart is yours.”*

Dream knew George couldn’t see him, but he thought he might cry at the raw emotion in George’s voice. Pleading, begging for him not to leave. Not even for George’s own benefit, but for Dream’s.

*“It’s you that I hold on to.”*

Why was he leaving? In this moment, when George sang him a sweet song, Dream wondered why he considered leaving this beautiful human being in exchange for a pair of people who claimed to love him yet prayed for his downfall.

*“Yeah that’s what I do*

*And I know I was wrong*

*But I won’t let you down.”*

All of the pent-up anger and frustration from the last few days seemed to evaporate as he saw George, vulnerable, willing to lay his emotions on the line in front of his friends and strangers alike. Dream’s hands twitched. His arms felt empty.

*“I said, oh*

*I cry, oh.”*

How could he make a single syllable sound so angelic?

*“Yeah, I saw sparks*

*Yeah, I saw sparks.”*

Dream saw sparks too.

He saw sparks when he saw George.

*“And I saw sparks*

*Yeah, I saw sparks."*

With the final strum of the song, Dream hardly heard the crowd around him erupt into louder applause than he maybe had ever heard. He felt like he was underwater, watching his own life play out in front of him through pools of warping water.

Bashfully, George lets go of his guitar and steps closer to the microphone. Desperately, his eyes scan the crowd, and Dream can practically see the fight leave his body as his form slumps.

But Dream's feet moved before his mind did. Before he could talk himself out of it.

Muttering apologies, Dream weaved through the crowd until he was at the base of the stage, and unable to meet George's eyes just yet, he climbed onto the platform using the stairs and gradually lifted his head. He could feel the heat of people's stares and the spotlight warm the back of his neck.

Gulping, Dream meets George's eyes.

George, who still was holding Quackity's acoustic guitar and staring at him with wide, doe-like eyes.

George, whose promise of a necklace glittered in the too-bright lights overhead.

"Dream," George bursts, taking a step closer to him. "I, I get it if you hate me but- please, please don't go." George's lip quivers as he forces the words from his closing throat, "don't give up."

Even as George's voice was hoarse and broken and strained, all Dream could hear was the voice of a man who sang songs of heaven to him.

"I don't hate you," Dream says. "Of course I don't hate you."

George's eyes widen. "You don't?"

If this situation weren't so tense, Dream might laugh. "I couldn't hate you even if I wanted to."

They stare at each other, George with his arms around his own shivering body and Dream with his hands stuffed in his pockets before, in a swift motion to set aside his guitar, George practically raced forward to wrap his arms tight around Dream.

Without hesitation, Dream hugged back.

He let George stuff his face into his chest and cling onto him as if scared to let go, and Dream rested his chin on top of his damp hair. His hands rubbed George's back soothingly, rocking with him as they ignored the fact that everyone was watching them. Neither could find it in them to care.

Eventually, George pulls his face from Dream's chest and, with glittering eyes, he looks up to him and whispers, "will you stay?"

With the fondest smile he'd ever produced, Dream smooths a hand over George's cheek. "George," he murmurs, eyes locking. "I'm not going anywhere."

"Jesus fucking Christ," Quackity muses into the mic. Dream gives a chuckle as George nearly jumps out of his skin at the reminder that there were, in fact, other people in the world aside from them. "Would you guys get a fuckin' room?"

“Yeah,” Sapnap adds, “stop eye-fucking each other, it’s making me really uncomfortable.” Despite the shared laugh from the audience, Dream and George both glower at Quackity and Sapnap, yet there was an unspoken relief amongst all the band members that their star guitarist and drummer were, once again, back in their usual harmony.

The audience clapped as George picked up the acoustic guitar he left strewn to the side and placed it in the awaiting hands of Quackity, and patiently, Dream waited on the far side of the stage with an outstretched hand that George gladly took.

Together, they walked off the stage, leaving the teasing and squawking remarks behind them. Dream and George were both well aware they had a lot to work through, a lot to grow from, and that one song wasn’t going to fix the insecurities and problems they found in each other. But now that they were together again, stronger than ever, Dream had full faith they could overcome the obstacles set in front of them.

Once they were safely off stage and out of the gaze of the crowd and their bandmates, Dream paused his walking to look down at George, who blinked up at him.

“Thank you, George,” Dream said softly.

“For what?”

*For saving my life.* “For pulling me out of my own head.”

George gives a soft, doting smile. “I could tell you the same thing.” His face fades into something more serious. “But seriously, I’m sorry. I don’t know what came over me and I hope you know that I didn’t mean what I said-”

“Shh,” Dream murmurs against his lips. He leaned closer, closer, waiting for George to be the one to connect their lips before he said, “you know I love you, right?”

His heart stilled in his chest as, with their faces so close he could taste George’s breath on his lips, he searched George’s eyes for an answer. Was that stupid move to drop the L-bomb after they’d just found each other again?

Before Dream could apologize profusely or break in some kind of nervous breakdown, he felt George’s smile against his lips and, eyes hooded, George whispers, “I love you too.” Finally, after what felt like ages, they kissed.

*Really* kissed.

Dream hooked his index fingers along the belt loops of George’s pants and tugged his body closer as he kissed the breath out of him.

They kissed even as the distant, muffled sounds of their band performed, as they drew closer and closer until they couldn’t get much closer than this, until Dream’s thumbs drifted from his waistband to his sides, until he felt tears that weren’t his own against his cheeks. At that, he pulled back.

“Hey, hey,” Dream says, voice quiet. “Why are you crying?”

George gives a weak sniffle. “Sorry,” he says, voice uneven and bottom lip shaking. Even with silent tears streaming down his cheeks, catching the light’s glow from the other side of the curtains, he looked beautiful. “Sorry, I’m just so relieved...” George snuffles again. “And I’m really sleep deprived. I think I’m just tired.”



Dream gives a warm laugh before he pulls George in for another hug, holding him there, letting him cry and shushing away his embarrassed apologies. He kissed the top of his head and gave George his hoodie as he was practically shaking in his damp and cold clothes, and huddled under Dream's umbrella, the two walked across the parking lot and sat on either side of Dream's pickup.

They chattered and chattered away, about what they had been up to the past few days, and Dream found himself turning on streets just to have the drive last longer. They playfully argued over the aux chord but settled on a playlist they made together a few weeks back.

George told Dream all about how he searched for the song, *their* song, and by luck, he found it. "Sparks" by Coldplay.

Maybe they still had a long way to go. Maybe they still needed to talk some thing out, but Dream knew they would face the future hand-in-hand.

"I'm not going to fall asleep," George had said stubbornly after Dream's teasing of how tired he looked in the passenger's seat. He fell asleep five minutes later.

The rain stopped by the time Dream pulled his car into its designated spot at his own apartment complex, and gradually, George opened his eyes.

"Hey," Dream said. "It's fine if we go to my place, right?"

"Yeah," George says, yawning. "Yeah, of course."

When they gathered enough energy to step out of Dream's pick-up and slowly make their way to the building, Dream found that it smelled like rain, despite it being gone. Rain clung to the atmosphere long after it evaporated both in scent and in temperature. Dream knew they would always remember this, the time when they almost lost each other yet, through the blinding rain and gloomy clouds, they found each other again.

This was the calm after the storm.

But, as Dream fell asleep that night with a grounding sense of tranquility and George huddled against his side, he figured there would be no more storms. Only the light drizzles of rain they both liked.

"I love you," Dream whispered into George's shoulder.

"I know," George mutters.

"No," Dream protests, poking George's ribs. "Say it back."

"Mm," George groans.

"George."

"I love you, idiot."

"I know."

Go find me on twitter @jungkooksfic!  
also alright time to go back to sleep

# Up To No Good

## Chapter Notes

<https://twitter.com/thisisanonymou9/status/1388702310931603462>

THIS ART IS SO COOL WTF THANK YOU SO MUCH

(also the song in this chapter is "Up To No Good" by the Hoosiers!)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

### *George*

George's world had flipped absolutely upside-down.

In the best way possible.

A few months ago, George certainly would've turned up his nose at the prospect of being so reliant on someone else, and he certainly would've smacked away the opportunity to be loved and to love in a way he never had before.

But now, he would realize that this is a *good* kind of upside-down.

Sometimes, when people get so worked up over looking at life right-side up, they don't realize they're looking at it all wrong. This realization can come in form of experience or situation.

For George, he realized it in the form of a person.

A person who was currently missing from bed.

Disoriented from the blatant lack of warmth, George cracked open his eyes to find that it was early, too early for his eyes to be open and blasted with harsh sunlight. The bedsheets were tucked carefully around him, and with a fluttering heart, George realized that Dream likely rose from bed and placed blankets over him with care. Rubbing his eyes, George forces himself upward.

After blinking a few times to adjust to the brightness, George gave a wide yawn and took in the warmly familiar scenery of Dream's bedroom, and distantly, he could hear the sound of a shower running with the crack of light seeping into the room from the bathroom.

George contemplated getting out of bed and making them both some breakfast as he was more than well acquainted with where the pots and pans were in Dream's kitchen, but he figured that to *get* to the kitchen he had to get *out* of bed first, which definitely wasn't an option. Instead, he pulled the material of his hoodie close— Dream's hoodie, he would discover, as he gave it a fond inhale— and burrowed back under the blankets.

"George," a soft voice comes, accompanied with a warm hand on his upper back. He feels a few drops of water dampen the material of the blankets and gradually, he rolls over to stare up at the sight of his boyfriend— wow, he was still getting used to calling him that— standing with his waist swaddled in a towel. "Good morning," Dream says. "Didn't you want to join me?" He juts his thumb in the direction of the shower.

"Maybe next time," George mutters, pretending his face wasn't warm. "The bed's cold."

“Is it?” Dream teases. “Did you miss me?”

“No,” George mumbles, but as he did so, he lifted himself from his tomb of blankets enough to wrap his arms tight around Dream and tug him gently, yet Dream fell down on him anyways with a wheeze. His skin was dewy and smelled like the distinct, pleasant scent of soap he had. He found that smell comforting by now.

“George,” Dream scolds light-heartedly, “I need to get my clothes on.”

“Shut up,” George whispers. “Cuddle me, idiot.”

Despite half-hearted protests of needing to get dressed, Dream stayed in bed, his wet hair making the material of the pillow damp but George didn’t mind. They were quiet, simply spending the few silent minutes to hold each other. George basked in the feeling of Dream’s hand carding through his hair absently, but just as he felt his body drifting away to slumber, Dream was shifting away from him.

“Come on, sweetheart,” Dream prods, and if this were any other moment, George would tease Dream for such a sappy nickname, but his voice was filled with such dripping sincerity that he couldn’t find it in himself to be anything other than smitten. “It’s time to get up.”

Dream eventually pried himself away from George’s persuasive embrace, and George pulled himself from bed to the sound of the shower running. Dream must have turned on the water to get it warm for him. There was something so domestic, so sickeningly sweet as George woke himself up with a hot shower while Dream was on the other side of the curtain brushing his teeth and chattering up a storm.

There was something about Dream almost slipping from George’s fingertips the night before that made George particularly clingy this morning, but Dream didn’t show any signs of minding. Dream would only greet him kindly when he would intrude on his personal space, welcomed by open arms and a soft smile. The day was perfect as the two took their time enjoying breakfast before opening the homework they had procrastinated on, and once they completed enough to somewhat justify the Minecraft binge that followed, the night became dark enough for George to know it was well past the time he should return home. He had half a heart to stay, to crawl into Dream’s bed and pretend he was asleep as an excuse for his need to be wherever Dream was.

“I had a good day,” Dream murmurs as he leads George to the front door of his apartment. Dream offered to drive George home about a million times, but the guy looked ready to fall asleep any second. Sleepily, he presses a sweet kiss to the top of George’s hair. “You could just stay, y’know.”

George gives a smile. “I have early classes tomorrow. Plus, I don’t have any clothes over here.” Dream gives a grumble of protest, and it takes all of George’s strength not to say the words on the tip of his tongue: *there wouldn’t be any more goodbyes if we had the same apartment number.*

“Goodnight,” Dream starts, and George echoes it back, yet before he could so much as ponder the thought of leaving, Dream weaved his arms around his waist and leaned closer and closer until their lips connected. George planned to give him a short peck to bid him goodnight, but as usual, things didn’t go according to plan as shortly after he found hands tugging on his shirt and his own fingers lost in waves of blonde hair. “Are you *sure* you want to go home?” Dream presses a kiss to his jaw, and George tilts his head to give him room, “in the cold?” There’s a kiss to his neck, “without me?”

As George looks up at Dream and his mastered puppy eyes, he lets the unnecessary fears melt

away from his body. Dream was a great teacher for George in the fact that George was learning that it wasn't bad to need people. Not at all.

"Fine," George says, sighing, yet the smile was clear on his lips, "but don't come whining to me when you wake up to my early alarm."

"Yes!" Any exhaustion in Dream's body seemed to vanish as he waited for George to nudge off his shoes and leave them by the door. "Come on, let's watch that TV show you were telling me about."

---

George woke to an empty bed for the second time that day by the time the light was dark enough to make the stars shine stark against the sky.

It wasn't unusual to wake up in the middle of the night alone as sometimes Dream would either (attempt to) quietly move across the room to use the bathroom, or sometimes he would excuse himself to the kitchen to satisfy any midnight cravings that George would gladly join in on. But this time, the bathroom door wasn't cracked open, and there wasn't the sound of crinkling bags to be heard from the kitchen.

Mildly concerned, George yawned, stretched, and pulled himself from bed enough to drop his feet to the floor and made his way from the bedroom to the more central space of the apartment. The lights were all still off, bathing the apartment in darkness as the moon shrouded by the many clouds in the night sky. Somehow, the lack of light was only one component of the heaviness in the air.

George blinked his eyes into focus enough to see Dream, situated on the couch, hair still messy with bedhead and his shirt still twisted from sleep. The phone he held in his hands illuminated a sickly light onto his face. His eyes looked glassy.

"Dream?" George mutters. "Is everything alright?"

Dream snapped from his own mind as he struggled to meet George's eyes. "No," he says truthfully. George's brows crease together as his feet carried him to Dream where he sat beside him, their legs brushing as George wrapped both of his arms firm around his shoulders.

"George," Dream starts, breaking the silence. His voice sounded muddled. "Can you remind me why I shouldn't go back to Florida?"

George blinks. He didn't need to look at Dream's phone to know he had just gotten off of a call with his mother, likely telling her he wasn't coming down to Florida anymore. His gaze softens as carefully, he turns off the phone in Dream's clutching hands, bathing them in complete darkness that was more comforting than before. "Because you owe it to yourself to not go there," George murmurs, forcing his sleepy mind into orbit. "You belong in a place where you can be yourself. Your entire self." George knew all about Dream's family, and how despite having kind and understanding siblings, they had a shadow of overbearing ancestors behind them.

"Correct me if I'm wrong," George murmurs, "but music is *you*. It's part of you. Anyone asking you to give that up clearly doesn't *know* you." Dream heaves a heavy breath, yet he stayed silent as an act for George to continue, so he did. "You didn't go to Florida because deep down, you know you don't *really* want to give this up. Dream, you're the one who helped me realize I couldn't quit." He took Dream's hand in his own and gave it a squeeze, "so please, let me try to help you realize, too. It'll be tough, I'll be honest, but I'll be here for you." He leans forward and presses a

kiss to the center of his forehead, “I promise.”

“Thank you,” Dream whispers against his neck. “I just... I needed to hear you say it.”

“I’ll say it as many times as you need,” George whispers back.

Despite nearly sleeping through his alarm and waking up to sore joints as they fell asleep on the uncomfortable couch, George didn’t regret a single thing.

---

George was late.

Very on brand, in all honest truth, as that was the cause of this love story in the first place.

“George!” Dream’s voice comes from the kitchen. *Their* kitchen. They had their own apartment now with polaroids of the two of them and their bands taped on the walls, old vinyls spilling out from the shelves and onto the tables. It was messy, but it was personal, and it was theirs. “Come on, you idiot, we’re gonna miss it!”

“Could you grab my-”

“Already got it.” Dream shows George’s lucky guitar pick in front of him. George huffs a smile as Dream knew him impossibly well.

“And also my-”

“Already got that, too.” He hands George his pair of trademark Vans shoes. “Now come on, put those on in the car, we gotta go before someone pays off the bouncer!”

George snickers and playfully punches Dream’s arm. “Oh come on, we both know you’re the only one dumb enough to do that.”

Despite George’s shouted protests, they raced down the stairwell as they usually did, yet halfway down the second flight they had to walk as George nearly tripped over the railing with his untied laces.

Oh, that’s right, *what* are they late for?

Their last show.

Now, not their *last* last show. See, the two had made the executive decision to return to Paris, as promised, in the form of a semester abroad with their college. It would be the perfect opportunity to spend time internationally to get a taste of that traveling they both loved so much. But this would mean that the two of them would be away from their friends until Christmas, which despite all the excitement surrounding the haven across the Atlantic, they both knew they would miss them all dearly.

Dream and George easily navigated the backstage, George simultaneously tying his shoes and unzipping his guitar from its case as the two rushed their way onto the blinding lights of the stage.

“Finally,” Quackity sighs, “took you fuckers long enough.”

“These muffins are so late nowadays,” Bad quips.

“Just say the word *fuck*, you pussy,” Quackity groans.

“Language!”

“Shut the fuck up,” Wilbur booms in good nature, “the lovebirds are here, shockingly, so it’s time to perform.”

Karl snickers and gives his synth lead a testing tap to ensure the sound worked, and as George plugged in his guitar and Dream took a seat at the grand piano, the two were ready.

George felt a sense of nostalgia as he looked out at the familiar crowd cheering for the conjoined band, faces he could almost recognize one by one. These were the very people who breathed life into the spark of ambition he had from the moment he first stepped foot on this stage years ago, back when he was less confident, and he shriveled from the warmth of the spotlight.

Once everyone was in position, George and Sappnap started off the song with guitar and drums. It was a moody song, the guitar riffing before Wilbur leaned to his microphone and sung the first verse of the song. His voice was masterful as ever as he strummed background chords on his acoustic to support George’s riffs on his electric guitar. The song built tension as the drums and baseline picked up, and Dream— George just had to look at him— how his face was illuminated by the blue, purple, red, green lights like a painting and how his fingers danced along the keyboard with a mastered ease.

Wilbur built tension in his voice before he promptly stepped away from his microphone, a wordless invitation for George to take his place as he sung the chorus.

*“Oh, you think he’s looking lovely at you*

*But it’s nowhere near the truth.”*

George’s eyes drift to Dream’s as he sings, *“his mind is up to no good.”*

George used to feel a sick sense of dread whenever he would open his mouth to sing for an audience of people, but with Dream here, he didn’t feel any dread at all. Instead, he felt an unmasked excitement as his voice breezed over higher notes in accordance to his guitar that attacked the higher notes of the fretboard. He found comfort in the press of his fingers into the wire strings of his guitar, and the satisfying push and release that came with playing chords and notes.

Once George finished singing the chorus, Wilbur took over singing the verse again, giving George the chance to lift his head and look at the crowd of blinding, cheering faces. Some had their hands in the air, swaying with one another, and others clapped their hands together along to the beat Sappnap was holding down. But their energy was contagious, George found, as he sung the chorus with more strength than before. He continually looked over his shoulder to meet Dream’s gaze with a reciprocated smirk, yet as his lines faded into singings of “na na na,” George promptly sat on the lid of the grand piano and felt the vibrations of Dream’s piano solo as he followed along on his guitar.

The power their music held was clear in the crowd, whoops and hollers as Dream expertly navigated his piano solo. George believed that his body and mind entered a different state when he performed, that he was lifted into another dimension where the atmosphere was buzzing and heavy with excitement. He felt as if he was seeing the world through a new lens every time he performed, that the world was far more colorful when he was up here on a stage.

The song drew to a close before George wanted it to, but he absorbed the gratifying reward of the audience and all of their clapping and screaming. Slipping off the piano, George lets his guitar hang off of his frame by its strap as he approached the microphone.

“Thank you so much for having us this year,” George says, voice a little husked from all the singing, “Dream and I— Dream, get up here.” There’s a small cheer as Dream hops over amp chords and stray wires scattered on the stage before he invites himself to stand beside George with a small pinch to his waist. “Dream and I will be spending our next semester abroad in Paris, so this is actually our farewell.”

“Can we get one more cheer for these too?” Karl shouts from the back of the stage, and gladly, the audience obeys.

George feels Dream’s hand entwining with his own, and together, they look upon the sea of creation they made together.

People, maybe fewer than the stadium in San Diego but *people*, real people, cheered for them. It was hard to wrap his mind around, that their work had paid off, and the best was still yet to come.

“We did it,” Dream murmurs just for George to hear, squeezing his hand again, “we proved our worth.”

As George gave Dream a bright smile, the moment wasn’t ruined even as the entirety of the band crushed the two in a trampling hug with too many bodies and too little space, but no one seemed to mind.

*We proved our worth.* George thought about the night not long ago where Dream, nearly in tears, asked George to remind him why he hadn’t given up on himself. Why he hadn’t retreated to Florida.

In that moment, where they both knew they had done more than prove their worth, George knew that Dream would never give up on himself again.

---

“George, you are *so* drunk.”

“So are you!”

“At least I’m nuh-not trying to convince you that I can dance!”

“But I *can* dance, Dream.”

As something of a celebration before Dream and George left America for months, their bandmates decided to send them off with a bang as their final night would be spent blasted drunk at an impromptu party in Quackity’s apartment. George was well aware of his own inebriation, especially as his head seemed to spin and walking was far more difficult than he remembered, but he also was well aware of his own giggliness, and how willing he was to pounce on Dream and beg him to dance with him.

The rest of their friends were passed out wherever they saw fit; Bad was responsible and excused himself to go home, Wilbur was singing to himself in the bathtub, and Sapnap, Quackity, and Karl were all in a pile on the carpet, dead asleep.

Dream and George, meanwhile, were listening to *their* song, Sparks, for maybe the fifth time in a row. This was because George was insisting he would be able to slow dance without stepping on Dream’s toes. They both knew this wasn’t true, but they both were just trying to find excuses to keep drunk dancing around Quackity’s living room where they would trip over Sapnap’s arm stretched over the floor and catch each other and laugh.



George found himself singing along, offbeat and off key, but Dream smiled into his hair and pulled him close to himself where they were more of embracing and swaying than dancing. No one seemed to care.

When the two peeled themselves off of the floor of Quackity's apartment floor the next day to pack for Paris, they brought their yellow ukulele, packed securely at the top of George's suitcase. They slept for the entirety of the flight after bidding tearful goodbyes to their friends, and woke up to the sight of an airport they had been in just months before.

And George, all he asked for was for Dream to play all of Chopin's nocturnes for him again. And oh, he did. He played them over and over until he perfected them again, and until George hummed the tunes when he would wander around their rented apartment. George still tried to teach Dream French, and Dream still failed.

Even as they soaked up all of the foreign charm and comfort within the city and romance of Paris, George and Dream would be soon filled with greater ambition and hunger to travel and explore their own lives once they graduated following the second semester of that year.

George would always remember the sweet sound of his own slightly untuned acoustic guitar ringing through the apartment as he opens the door to see Dream sitting criss-cross on their bed playing the guitar. His fingers were slow to press into the corresponding places and sluggish to switch between chords, but George felt a big smile grow on his face.

*"I saw sparks,"* Dream sings as George sets down his bag from work and fills two matching mugs with hot water for tea.

*"I saw sparks,"* Dream hums, filling the room with the sweet voice George would never get sick of.

"Wow," George marveled, setting tea cups on the dining table as he walked over to their room to sit across from Dream. "You've gotten quite good."

"Yeah?" Dream grins. "I've got quite the good teacher." He sets the guitar aside and takes George's hands in both of his own, and squeezes them in that way he does when he's excited about something. And that's when he said the fateful words that would forever change their course: "I've been thinking."

And that's exactly how The Feral Boys and The Dream Team packed their bags and traveled all around the United States and Europe, delivering successful show after successful show. All because Dream had a pipe dream of traveling the world as a renowned musician.

George recognized the faces of his and Dream's parents in the crowd, and though the greetings were rough at first, it was progress. Positive progress.

But it wasn't until the one night when Dream and George were sitting in Dream's old truck driving around the night as they liked to do when, out of nowhere, Dream swerved the car into the bike lane, yanked it in park, and with barely contained excitement, pointed his finger at the radio where, surely enough, their own music was playing.

"Holy shit!" George had screamed, throwing himself to hug Dream over the cup-holders, "we're fucking famous!"

"Yeah," Dream echoed, "we're fucking famous!"

Success is usually defined, from the societal perspective, in stacks of dollar bills, or in sizes of

estates.

But George, at the age of twenty-four, decided he had a better grip of what success was than that.

As he looked down to see his boyfriend peacefully sleeping with his head in his lap, George smiled to himself as he really, really knew what success was.

Success was the ability to look at himself, at what his future held, and be proud.

“Thank you,” George murmured, adjusting blonde locks from Dream’s forehead, “for paying off that bouncer.”

Dream smiled at him, eyes still closed. “Any time.”

## Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for being here with me through this!! I'm so so sad to see this fic go but I had a blast writing it!

Thank you for all of your comments and kudos, they seriously make my day :) I love you all so much and take care <3

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!